CURRENT NOTES

Your Monitor on the World of ATARI

Vol. 12, No. 9

November 1992
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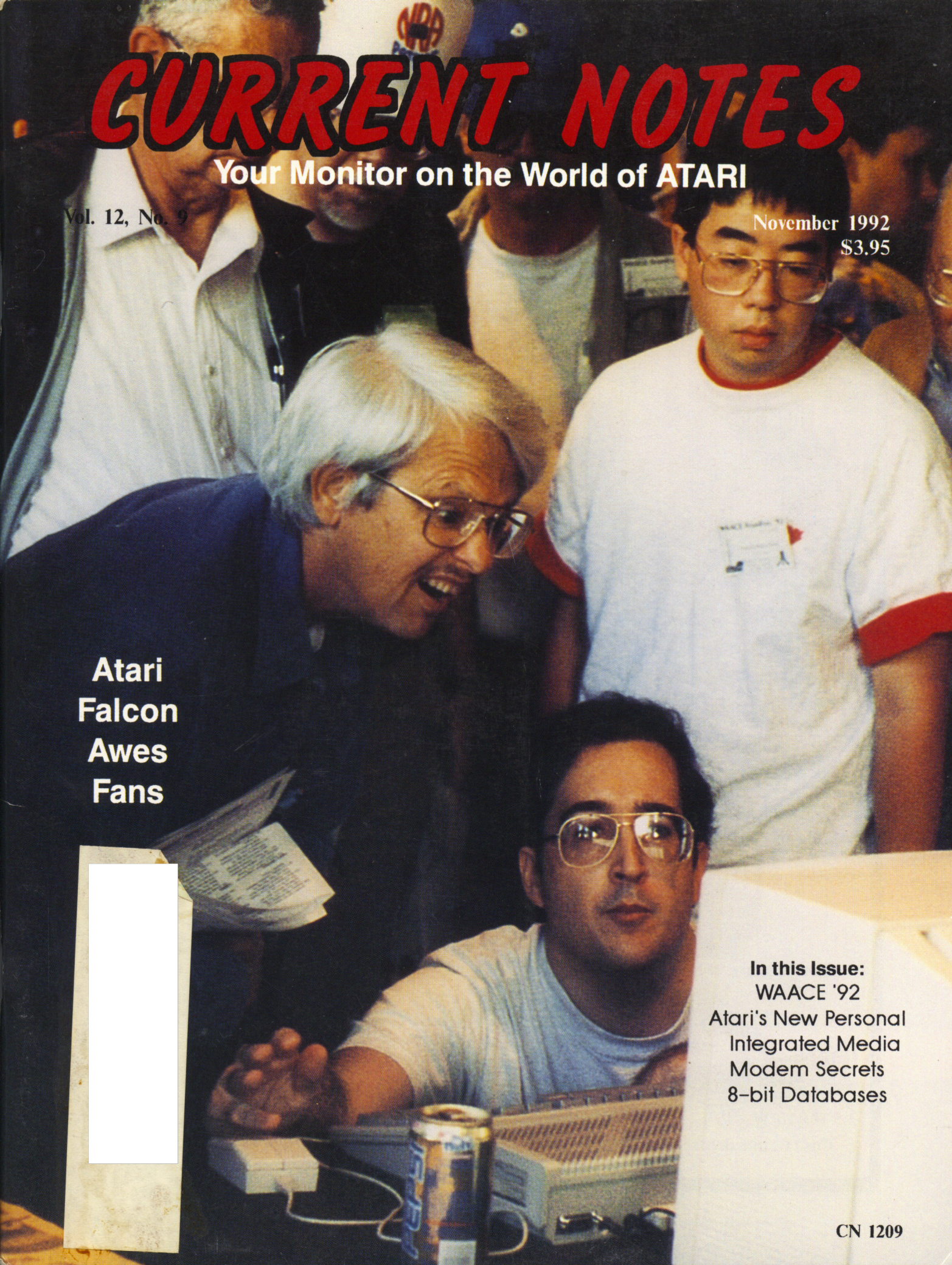

Atari Falcon Awes Fans

In this Issue:

WAACE '92
Atari's New Personal Integrated Media
Modem Secrets
8-bit Databases

CN 1209

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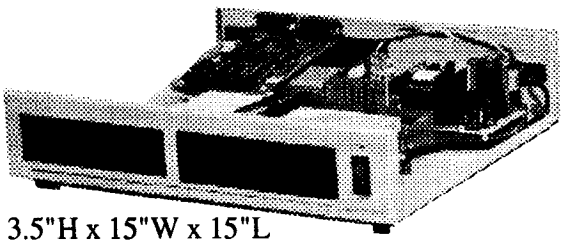

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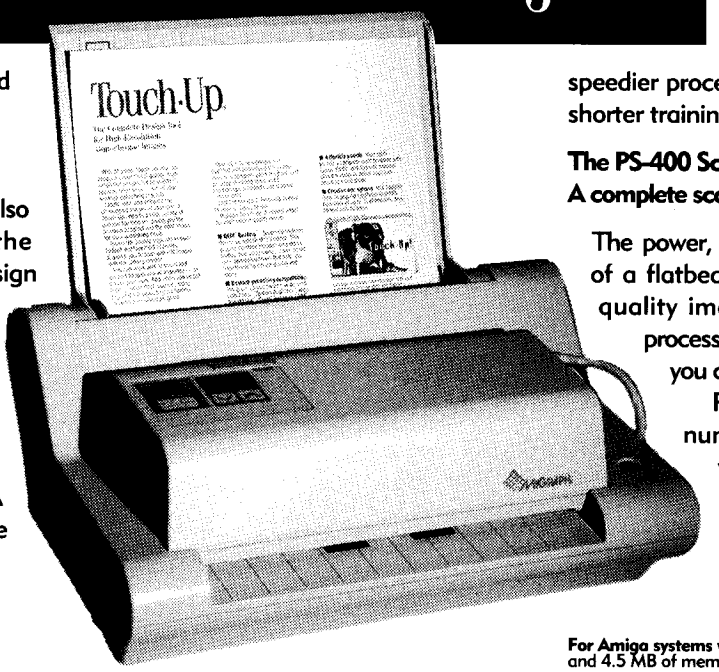

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The cover: Dave Small, here with a new Falcon030, and many other developers again presented mesmerizing demonstrations at the recent WAACE AtariFest '92 near Washington, D.C. Photo by Mik e Heininger, (c) 1992.

ATARI SHOW ANNOUNCEMENTS

November 16 – 20: Fall COMDEX

The biggest computer trade show in the USA is held, once more, in Las Vegas, Nevada. Atari will, once again, have a major presence at the show where the Falcon will dominate the Atari booth providing outstanding demonstrations for the dealer and distributor attendees.

December 12 – 13: No. CA Atari Expo

»»»»»CANCELLED«««««

We regret to announce that due to a number of ongoing problems with regards to scheduling and commitments the Northern California Atari Expo has been cancelled. There are currently no plans to reschedule the show in the near future.

If you would like to see your event announced in "Atari Show Announcements," send relevant information to Current Notes, 122 N. Johnson Rd, Sterling, VA 20164. Send electronic mail to JOE.WATERS on GEnie or to 74005,1270 on CompuServe.

Happy Thanksgiving!

MOVING?

Don't forget to send in a change of address notice if you are moving. *Current Notes* is distributed via second class US mail. The post office does not forward second class publications; they throw them away.

From the Editor's Desk

by Joe Waters

Those of you who made it to the 1992 Washington Area Atari Computer Enthusiasts' AtariFest had a grand time. Those of you who didn't will have to experience the event through the pages of CN. You can view the event through the eyes of many people. Dave Parsons tells us about the WAACE show through the eyes of a very typical Atari enthusiast. Tammy Drucker gives us a woman's perspective. Andrzej Wrotniak and Dave Small add their unique perspectives as Atari developers. And, if a picture is worth a thousand words, this issue of CN is our largest by far with plenty of pictures to show you what the action was like.

As has become customary, the WAACE AtariFest banquet was held in the Sheraton Reston Hotel on Saturday evening. This year's guest speaker was Atari's Bill Rehbock. Bill had an excellent presentation, discussing the marketing analysis and strategy that went behind the development of the Falcon030. A good deal of the substance of Bill's talk can be found in the article on "Personal Integrated Media: At Atari Perspective." This piece was included in the press packet announcing the Falcon and gives readers a good view of just where Atari thinks this new computer fits in.

Bill showed off the Falcon during his talk and, again, during his presentation on Sunday afternoon. Most people were clearly impressed. Indeed, if the Falcon were for sale, quite a few would have gone at the WAACE Atarifest. But, perhaps, it's a good thing that they are not for sale yet. The hardware has a lot of capability, but there is not much software available yet to show off that capacity. Indeed, most developers hadn't even received a Falcon yet. The longer it takes to make the big push in the US market, the more time there will be to produce software that can make the Falcon shine, particularly in the area of sound and graphics. As a computer, there are lots of competing products, with excellent software, that do the typical business applications quite well. Atari needs to encourage, and exploit, the software that makes the Falcon unique.

Another tradition of the WAACE AtariFest banquet is the announcement of the *Current Notes* Author of the Year. I am very pleased to announce that Richard Gunter was our award winner for 1992. Richard has been producing "Starting Block" since 1988. His consistent, excellent, efforts have introduced thousands of new (and old) users to the ins and outs of RAM disks, hard drives, data bases, archiving, and many other topics. After the award, winners from the previous four years came up to congratulate Richard (see picture). As publisher, I am very grateful that this group of excellent writers (although they do look like a motley crew in the picture!) continues to bring our readers their excellent insights year after year. Thanks to all of you.

Richard Gunter, the 1992 CN Author of the Year, proudly shows off his plaque. Next to him are previous years' winners, from left to right: Andrzej Wrotniak (1989); David Troy (1991); David Small (1988); and John Barnes (1990).

Letters to the Editor

GFA-Software Still Here!
Dear Sirs;

On Thursday October 15th, 1992, I received a phone call from a *GFA-BASIC* multi-platform programmer. He asked how the closing of our German headquarters and selling of our Atari version of *GFA-BASIC* would effect the other versions of *GFA-BASIC* (MS-DOS, Windows, and Amiga) and how could he get support for the Atari version. "Closing of our headquarters," I asked, "Selling *GFA-BASIC Atari*?" He then went on that he read in the October '92 issue of *Current Notes* that "...Since GFA headquarters in Dusseldorf was closed down at the end of 1991, there hasn't been any support for the popular development platform... The software distributor Richter has now made a deal with GFA in order to revive GFA-BASIC..."

This came as complete surprise to me since I was AT THAT VERY MOMENT working on an ad for a NEW version of *GFA-BASIC 3.7* for the Atari. The above quote is misleading and grossly misrepresents the support status of *GFA-BASIC*. We did close down our German offices, in order to move into *larger* ones. We have made a deal with Richter, for German distribution only, just as we distribute *GFA-BASIC Atari* via Pacific Software Supply and *GFA-BASIC DOS/Windows* via the major PC distributors. The article did not mention any of this and as a result, we have received a huge number of calls (many in hysterics).

It is important for people to know that *GFA-BASIC* and GFA-Software Technologies, Inc. are here to stay and fully support the Atari market. Said support can be shown in the imminent release of *GFA-BASIC 3.7* with more new features than you can "shake a joystick at" (including a new GEM-Based editor, a faster compiler, and Falcon/MultiTOS compatibility).

Thank you for your time.

John Barger
Technical Director

[GFA-Software Technologies, Inc., 27 Congress St., Salem, MA 01970. (508) 744-0201; (508) 744-8041 FAX.]

GEMulator Preview Opinionated
Dear Current Notes,

Being readers of your publication for a number of years, we have come to expect quality reviews of the products you cover. However, we feel that Milt Creighton's Gemulator preview contains a number of opinionated and speculative points that are not backed up by facts. The preview also contains a number of errors that need to be cleared up. We'd appreciate it if you would publish the following corrections to Milt's article.

Milt states in his preview "I doubt the total RAM requirement will shrink significantly... the total is 7 MB for the latest beta version..." The production version is down to 5 megabytes of RAM, and the file is now 2.9 MB. And so users are not shocked, Gemulator's size is small when compared to programs such as *MS Word 2.0* for *Windows* (which easily takes up 18 MB). That's why most PC's are sold with 120 MB hard drives.

The production version runs fine under *Windows*. Beta versions are for testing purposes, and sometimes code gets changed to test out functions which cause other code to not work properly. That's the reason for a beta version. We always make sure that a production version has all of the bugs removed that may be present in a beta version. We don't expect people to buy a beta test version of Gemulator. Thus, we found Milt's question of "Should you buy Gemulator?" to be rather pointless. The idea of a preview is to offer users a glimpse at what is coming, not to see if they want to buy that version—that's what a REVIEW is for.

If you would like to check whether your facts are straight regarding one of our products which you may be reviewing, we are always available to answer questions you may have.

Oh yeah, since Milt brought up pricing... he says that you can buy a new or used ST system equal to what Gemulator provides. Really? A Mega 2 ($250), a color ($145) and monochrome monitor ($85), a 32 MB hard drive ($125—let's go with that since that's the current amount accessible by Gemulator), a 1.44 MB floppy ($95), and a TEC TOS 2.06 upgrade ($135). Wow, that's $835, and those used prices are extremely conservative (we should know since we buy, sell, and trade used Atari ST systems). Even considering the incredible (buying such a system for half that), you'd still pay more than for Gemulator. So, please substantiate your claims with facts.

Sincerely,
Oscar Steele
Purple Mountain Computers

Mono Cookbook Answers
Dear CN,

This is in response to the letter in the September issue from Roger Smith. I do not know of a cookbook program that works in monochrome. In fact, the cookbook programs I have are mostly collecting electron dust in my hard drive. My wife does not care for the conventions required by the programs to input new recipes. After getting frustrated, she decided to use *Findex V.*

She is much happier with that arrangement and that's all that counts. This way she has the freedom to add new recipes and can search for the recipes using whatever means she wants. She is not stuck with a predetermined format requirement and can change her format at will to suit her needs. It also means that I can look up recipes with a minimum of instruction.

This does not answer the question posed by Mr. Smith, but I think the *Findex V* data base provides a much more flexible option to the packages, even when you consider that the recipes have to be input by hand. I find it makes more financial sense to have one program that can have a variety of uses, instead of a specialized program.

Daniel M. Parrish
North Pole, AK

[*Findex V* (reviewed last month) and *Recipe Box!* (reviewed this month) may both provide good solutions. —JW]

Beware ST Connection
Dear Editor,

I need your help in dealing with one of your advertisers known as "Computer Publications, Unltd." I have not been able to get an answer from this company regarding my subscription to *ST Connection* magazine. It has been over 6 months and after repeated phone calls and letters, I still have not gotten one issue on my subscription. I know that my money order has been cashed by the company because about 22 months ago, I verified this by getting a copy of the money order from the bank that issued the money order. I was really looking forward to getting the magazine because I bought an issue of it at a computer store and thought it was a very interesting magazine. This is what made me want to subscribe. I do not know if you have had any other similar letters, but as I said, I have tried calling and writing to no avail. I would at least like a postcard from this company stating, "Don't worry, your subscription is in the mail..."

James Escobedo
Santa Maria, CA

[We have received other letters with the same complaint. Buyers beware! —JW]

Atari Industry News and Announcements

SCSI Tape Kit (Beckemeyer Development)

The SCSI Tape Kit is now available. The introductory suggested retail price is $49.95 including the HD Toolkit backup software ($29.95 retail). Current owners of HD Toolkit may purchase just the SCSI Tape Kit for $20.

The SCSI Tape Kit allows you to connect any standard SCSI tape drive to your Atari computer and use the HD Toolkit software to do tape backups. The HD Toolkit programs are fully GEM based, easy-to-use, fast, and reliable. Multiple partitions may be written to a single tape. Backup by file, directory, partition, or the entire disk at once. Has the ability to restore a single file or directory, or restore an entire partition. Save configurations, scripting, and more.

Beckemeyer Development, P. O. Box 21575, Oakland, CA, 94620; (510) 530-9637.

Codehead Technologies

BUS TEC – The TOS Extender Card has been released in a new version that provides a Mega Bus feed thru connector so that people with other add-on cards in Mega ST computers can enjoy the use of TOS 2.06.

Warp 9 Version 3.73 – Patch modules are available on Compuserve and GEnie to upgrade earlier versions of Warp 9 and Extend-O-Save to version 3.73. These patches represent minor bug fixes.

Codehead Technologies; P. O. Box 74090, Los Angeles, CA, 90004; 213-386-5735; FAX 213-386-5789.

STraight FAX! Ver 1.05 (Joppa Software Development)

STraight Fax ver 1.05 – Includes a number of enhancements to the user interface and functionality for the program. Registered users may order the upgrade directly from Joppa Software Development by sending the master disk and $2.00 to the address given below. Users with a STraight FAX! manual Version 1.00 manual may purchase a new **Version 1.04 manual** by sending in the cover from the old manual and $5.

Atari Corporation's FONT GDOS is available direct from Joppa Software Development to registered STraight FAX! owners. The cost for the three disk FONT GDOS package is $10 (US funds).

A **scanner driver program** for use with the STraight FAX! to allow direct scanning from a Navarone/ Canon Full Page Flat Bed (IX-12F) or Sheet Feed (IX-12) Scanner is also available for $19.95.

Please include your name as it appears on the Registration Card and your Registration Number with all orders.

All prices are in US funds and include shipping within the continental USA. No checks drawn on foreign bank accounts, please.

Joppa Software Development, P.O. Box 214, Dallastown, PA 17313-0214; (717) 428-3231; FAX (717) 428-0424

CHROMAX Color Board (Merlin Group)

With 1 megabyte of dedicated video ram, Chromax is capable of multiple resolutions of more than 1024 horizontal by 768 vertical, in 2, 4, 16, 256, 32768, 65536 and 16.7 million color modes, with a palette of more than 16.7 million colors to choose from.

This allows the user to select the most applicable mode for the needs of the moment, whether it's 15, 16 or 32 bit true colors for photo realism, 256 color mode for desktop publishing, 16 color mode for CAD, or 2 color (duochrome) mode for monochrome only programs like Spectre.

Chromax can also be delivered in configurations for driving large screen monitors like the Viking from Moniterm.

Resolutions of 512x512, 640x400, 640x480, and 800x600 are supported at 60 or 70 Hz., in 2, 4, 16, 256 colors from a palette of 16.7 million colors. 15, 16, or 32 bit true color modes are also supported. 1024x768 displays are 60 Hz in 2, 4, 16 or 256 colors from a pallete of 16.7 million. All Chromax resolutions are non-interlaced. There is also an option connector, to allow for small board to NTSC video or genlocking hardware.

This announcement is primarily an interest survey. Contact George or Helen Richardson at Merlin Group to be placed on their mailing list.

Information Source: CIS File: CMAX1.TXT in ATARIVEN Lib 14.

Merlin Group Inc., 96 Hoyt Street, Kearny, NJ 07032-3311; (201) 998-4441; Fax: (201) 998-0932; CIS [75275,1363].

Tracker/ST Ver 3.04 (Step Ahead Software)

Tracker/ST, a mailing list manager, is now available in version 3.04. A new Windows version is also available for those who need to do some of their work on DOS machines. Tracker/ST for Windows is practically identical to the current version of Tracker/ST for the Atari ST, STe, and TT (v3.04).

The Windows version looks the same, runs the same, and has practically all the same features. Data transfer between the Atari and Windows version is very simple, allowing the user to retain all of the special components of the database.

Step Ahead Software, 496-A Hudson St, #F39, New York City, NY, 10014; (212) 627-5830; GEnie Nevin-S.

Supra V32bis ROM Upgrade (Supra Corp)

Two new ROM sets are available to registered users of Supra Corporation's V32/V32bis FAX modems. One ROM set is currently specified as **rev 1.2H**, and is being made available free to all registered users who submit a valid order.

The new ROM set corrects a number of problems and implements new capabilities, including Fall Back, Adaptive Answering, and Silent Answer.

The second ROM set is **rev 1.2J** and includes all enhancements of rev 1.2H plus Caller ID (if supported by software). This ROM is available for a cost of $19.95 plus $5.00 shipping.

See the files on CIS and GEnie for complete order information and performance specs. Supra will also be sending upgrade offers to all registered owners, so make sure that you have returned your card.

Information source: File UPGRAD.TXT in CIS ATARIVEN Forum, Library 15, dated 24 Sept 1992. SUP_ROMS.LZH, file 26030 in GEnie Atari ST RT library, 5 October 1992.

Supra Corporation, 7101 Supra Drive SW, Albany, OR 97321; (503) 967-2400; Sales (503) 967-2410; Fax (503) 967-2401; Tech Support (503) 967-2440 8:00am - 5:00pm PST, M-F; BBS (503) 967-2444 24 Hours; CIS [76004,565]; GEnie SupraTech.

Mah-Jong Solitaire 3.0 (CALI-CO)

Shipments of Mah-Jong Solitaire 3.0 will begin October 30, 1992. This tile-based game is an expansion of their Mah-Jong solitaire 2.2. Maj-Jong is a solitaire game in which the tiles are removed by pairs, the object being to remove all the tiles from the playing board. Version 3 has many new features. It has several new tile sets, layouts, and has handsome "tablecloths" to play on. It is possible to start a game at any time, to save a game, to load a saved game, or to pause a game. "Show Tiles," "Suggest Move," and "Undo" are options. The requirements for this program are an Atari ST with a color monitor and DS drive.

The suggested retail price is $39.95. Owners of Maj-Jong Solitaire 2.2 can obtain a copy of 3.0 for the modest sum of $10 plus the original 2.2 disk. Note: Cali-Co uses minimalistic recycled and recycleable packaging with the intent to be environmentally friendly.

Cali-Co Superior Software, PO Box 9873, Madison WI 53715. Voice: (608) 255-6523; Fax: (608) 244-6681.

To All Atari Vendors: Current Notes' new product listings are provided as a convenience for Atari developers and consumers. Vendors wishing to place new product announcements are encouraged to submit brief (200 words or so) descriptions of their products together with all information needed for contacts from users. Announcements may be sent via GE mail to JOE.WATERS or via CIS Mail to Joe Waters 74005,1270. Internet mail to johnbarnes@enh.nist.gov will also help assure publication. U.S. Mail to the address given on the inside front cover must reach Current Notes by the first of each month.

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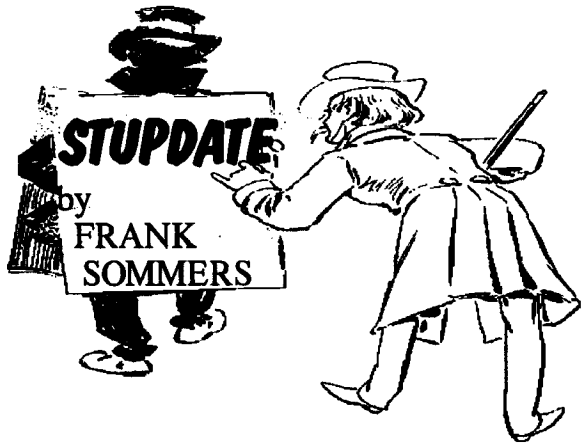

DOWN MEMORY LANE, FALCON FLUTTERS BUT STILL NOT FLYING, HATS OFF! ATARI

A machine that provides such pleasure to thousands, if not millions, should succeed. Will it?

Nostalgia

Our too brief Saturday morning visit to the Washington Area AtariFest brought back memories galore, memories of the first high school crowded fests in Virginia with the beautiful big gray Atari 800's, soon to be replaced or at least superceded by faster brothers and sisters. And then the leap forward three years ago to the mighty Reston Hotel scene with all its comparative opulence. Our impression (see detailed reports elsewhere in this issue) was that within an hour after the doors opened the rooms were well populated, vendors were pleasingly frantic getting their wares into the hands of a press of buyers and Atari, itself, was hard to find. No signs, no lights, no commanding faces told you where you could find a Falcon, yet you knew there were six of them scattered around somewhere. Productivity room! Yup, there was one with the mighty name on it, but alone at an empty table as somebody across the room was demo–ing a spread sheet package to a band of intent faces. (The next day, we understand, Bill Rehbock from Atari did spend a couple of hours showing off the machine, in addition to a well done seminar about it.) But somehow the Fest, a considerable success with much enthusiasm evident in all of the rooms, overwhelmed the Falcon, or at least kept it from being the center stage item it should have been, if it is, indeed, to carry Atari forward into 1993.

Herpetorium

Washington columnists 10 days before the election were saying that the situation at the White House was chaotic. There was no clear indication that documents were being shredded, but reputations were. Almost publicly. Backstabbing was turned into an art form. To be sure, records were being destroyed and resumes were being revised with the speed of summer lightning and the adroitness of Picasso. Blame for blunders abounded and was designated and then redesignated. Fear ran its fingers up and down the corridors. It was being called, "Snake pit time at the White House." Even James Baker, political tactician extraordinaire and high priest in charge of soothing Republican user groups, be they left or right handed, had been almost invisible.

Word has it that the situation at Atari, Sunnyvale, while tense, is not quite that tense. To be sure, Bob Brodie, Baker's opposite number in charge of Atari user groups, is less than highly visible, and contrary to conventional wisdom was missed by many at the WAACE AtarFest.

Now, Alan Strumph, head of Atari, Germany and former head of Atari world wide is gone. He replaced Ellie Kenan, who left the job abruptly to return to his position as head of Atari, France, believing life under Mitterand was better than it was under Jack Tramiel. What caused Strumph's destruction and how it was administered is not current knowledge, but it happened suddenly. Financial stalwart, Auggie Ligouri was forced to jump on a plane and, by now, is in place, doing temporary duty trying to stabilize Atari's star in cabbage land until a permanent head can be found.

Downsizing

What does it all mean for the future and the Falcon? As the famous Agatha Christie mystery novel, "Ten Little Indians," goes, first there were ten guests at the estate and then there were only nine, and finally the last one had been done ... in. Rumors abounded last month that Atari, U.S. had about the same number of people working for it as were regularly involved in putting on the WAACE AtariFest in October. If you subtract the Tramiel management team, that would mean 14 people, and everybody seemed sure that was the situation.

Well, so what? All companies of all sizes are restructuring and cutting costs and personnel. Why not Jack Tramiel? True, Jack Tramiel might be considered one of the more experienced downsizers around, having taken Atari from something less than a 1000 in the U.S. down to... 14 plus four? Nope. Best estimates, now that a more accurate head count is available, would be six times that, or something over 60 in the U.S. That excludes the Lynx group in Illinois, all the programmers of which have apparently gone to work for Sega.

The Falcon030 and The Falcon040

Right now we all seem to be hanging by our fingers on a ledge that soon, very soon, hopefully, will be flooded with Falcon's that will bring new Mach speed to Atari machines and their users. Where is the Falcon030? Well, as we note below, they have been seen, in numbers, in Dusseldorf, Germany and six at the WAACE AtariFest last November. And developers? A number of them have them, as long as the products they are developing don't fall into the utility category. (Sorry, CodeHead.) Also, by Christmas, some believe that each Atari dealer in the U.S. will have two machines for use to tempt and draw orders. (One wag, estimates that totals 44 machines.)

What's holding up the Falcon? We know that about 200 were produced in Taiwan, and a quantity of those shipped to Dusseldorf. Then what happened? Talk to the 17 engineers who are about to be out of work in Dallas. Few of us were aware that about the time that Federated imploded, a group called Atari Micro Systems was formed in Dallas. They were the ones who took on the task of getting the Mega STe into production. They also struggled with FCC clearance for the, now nearly defunct, TT, getting Class A approval, but then running into a wall with Class B, which finally was received about a year ago, but a bit too late.

Suddenly, about five months ago, Atari, Israel (how many of us had ever heard of Atari, Israel) was closed and the design of the system for the Falcon030 was rushed to Dallas, where the word was spread that the Falcon had to be ready "instantly." Chips were completed and two teams of engineers were sent to Taiwan to oversee a blitz production of 200 of them. The eight engineers there were successful and soon Falcon's were winging their way to Germany. But as with any initial run there were glitches and some of these showed on the machines in Germany. Are the eight Atari Micro Systems engineers in Taiwan helping to turn out more and better machines?

No, the Dallas company, per one of those involved, is now closing down. The 35 employees are being salaried during the phase out, but the company, by the time you read this, will purportedly no longer exist as an Atari engineering asset. The entire company, in fact, may already have been picked up by another unnamed computer company. Production of the Falcon030 is on hold, pending further tests.

Does that mean that the Falcon040 will now be engineered in Sunnyvale? Probably not, although want ads are appearing in papers in the area in a hurried call for engineers to replace the Dallas group. In fact, unless the current Falcon040 prototype performs successfully, the project will be terminated according to one of the engineers involved. Atari apparently, in addition to cutting costs by closing the Dallas office, will invest no further monies in its latest hope.

So, what is left when, having abolished all national advertising and marketing, you eliminate your engineering capacity? We submit, not much.

That saddens the True Atari Believers, because it suggests the end may be in sight. Any comparison with Atari and other computer companies is difficult. Whether you are talking about the number of people in the PC users group in the Capitol area, i.e., 5,000 or Apples' gross sales of its PowerBook computer,i.e. $1 Billion, you're confronting us, the Atari addicted, with the fact that the best machine, our machine, is but a speck of dust in the vast huge computer world (less than 1/10 of 1% of the computers being used in America).

Perspective is often difficult to accept, but it is necessary, if one hopes to stay in touch ... with reality. The best example of perspective? If an accurate account of human history were confined to 30 minutes: 29 minutes and 51 seconds would be devoted to the hunter–gatherers, and seconds plus to the settled agricultural society. And a fraction of the last second to the modern, fossil–fueled industrial world, that now in the last milli–second has included computers.

Final Hats Off!

For the machine that has given us such constant high performance and satisfaction and the company that makes it, we would like to say, though we've belted you and flayed you, by the liven god that made you, you have rendered us a whale of a service, Atari. It's not just the thousands of dollars saved a year by not having to hire a secretary, or the printing costs for the daily flow of desktop fun and trivia, or the sheer pleasure and relaxation derived from any of a number of games. It has, in fact, become an essential part of our life, and we expect it to continue to be for years to come, no matter what.

So, Atari and all of you in Atari out there in Sunnyvale, we offer a resounding Hats Off!.....

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PERSONAL INTEGRATED MEDIA

AN ATARI PERSPECTIVE

For years now, industry pundits have talked about multimedia for the masses: outrageously describing Star Trek-like voice interfaces, wall-size computer screens with sparkling video and instant manipulation of graphics and video. But only now, with the advent of personal integrated media, have the predictions begun to sound plausible for consumers at large.

Personal integrated media is accessible computing power that will give individuals the ability to manipulate time-based data: video, audio, text, automation and telecommunications. We'll be able to *talk* to our computers instead of only typing; *listen* instead of reading; *watch* animation and video instead of seeing stagnant images.

Personal integrated media is an evolutionary step beyond multimedia; it's specifically designed for use by the consumer, not just the businessperson, providing an easy-to-use, quality system at an affordable price.

A personal integrated media system can be defined by the following criteria:

- The reproduction of photographic-quality images. Consumers in the United States spend more than 1500 hours a year watching television, home videos and movies.
- High-quality audio reproduction, equal to or better than compact discs and digital audio tape. U.S. consumers spend 1300 hours a year listening to the radio and recorded music and can easily discern the difference between tinny low quality sound and high-quality audio.
- Media-ready for immediate gratification. A personal integrated media system must come ready-to-use and be easy-to-use. Users should not be expected or required to purchase additional hardware, reconfigure equipment or write intricate software programs before being able to accomplish their personal integrated media goal.
- Availability of interesting, entertaining, and easy-to-use personal software applications. Personal integrated media applications are focused around an individual's personal interests, not their business requirements. Software appealing to leisure activities, fun, education, self-improvement and personal satisfaction are paramount.
- Value. Whereas multimedia appealed to business interests that could invest large amounts of money for equipment, personal integrated media systems must provide a multitude of features for a reasonable cost of $1,000 or less.

Each of these quality and value standards is easily recognized and inherently understood by users. These are areas in which the consumer market is well experienced; they will not adopt a new technology that does not meet, or improve upon, their existing standards. Systems that fail to meet these criteria will not be accepted by consumers.

The Evolution of Personal Integrated Media

Disparate technological developments over the last two decades are merging into powerful, and soon-to-be invaluable, tools for personal productivity. Computers, consumer electronics and telecommunications are blending together and will subtly begin changing our personal lives, much as these technologies have already affected business. Just as it would be difficult to imagine living without automobiles and shopping centers, the next generation of computing will help define our perspective, our leisure and even our thinking.

The change is fueled by our passion for technological tools and entertainment, and our comfort with new forms of media. According to the Electronics Industry Association, 98% of U.S. households have televisions and radios, and more than 90% of all televisions purchased have remote controls. 94% have audio systems. 77% have video cassette recorders, 58% are wired for cable television and view an average of 60 different channels, 35% have compact disc players and video games, and 33% have home computers. Add to that the answering machines, fax machines and microwave ovens and the result is a population comfortable, proficient and dependent on new technology.

The changes have been labeled by different names over time. The combination of technologies, all under the control of a computer, has most often been referred to by the catch-all phrase *multimedia*, and the projections for the industry are staggering. Currently considered a $701 million business, Grassroots Research of San Francisco, California expects the U.S. multimedia market to grow to $6.8 billion by 1995.

Everyone seems to be joining the multimedia fray: Microsoft established a minimum standard for multimedia hardware known as Multimedia Personal Computing (MPC). IBM considered Microsoft's standard as "dangerously low" and introduced its own, "Ultimedia." Apple is also fighting for a piece of the lucrative multimedia pie, writing its own software standard known as Quick Time. But with so many divergent definitions, what is multimedia? Is it really the logical conclusion of the merger of these technologies?

Tim Bajarin, executive vice president of Creative Strategies Research International in Santa Clara, California recently said, "My vision of multimedia computing has been greatly expanded. While it will be a technology that will be perfected in the business climate of today, and used [there] first, I now also believe that it will eventually become the revolutionary way people all over the world will learn and become equipped to handle the rapid information and technological changes of the future." The expansion of multimedia is the result of numerous trends:

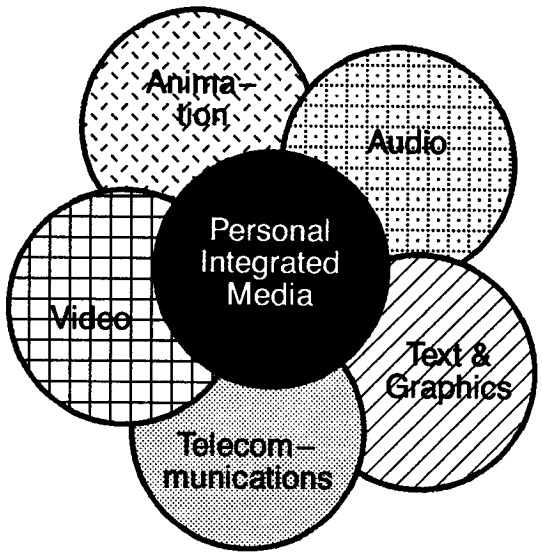
- As the cost of specialized computer equipment decreases, the number and type of interested users increases.
- Application software is evolving. More and more of it can be used in either a passive or interactive fashion, broadening its consumption and purpose.
- The general public is increasing its "electronic interactivity literacy." The growth in electronic remote control devices, video games and keyboards attests to the population's expanding comfort level.
- Consumer capacity for new media is continuing to increase. According to an April 16, 1992 report by Volpe, Weltry & Company, "As the popularity of relative new media, such as video games, cable and home video have soared, the use of traditional media such as television, radio and newspaper has declined only slightly."

In addition, the result of multimedia's expansion, as evidenced in the next generation of computing systems, will be the creation of a new arena, one in which individuals will experience the power imagined by Bajarin.

That arena is personal integrated media.

The Personal Integrated Media Arena

Personal integrated media is the logical evolution of multimedia. Just as the printing press made written material generally available, personal integrated media will make today's information widely available. Not only will individuals be able to freely-and interactively-manipulate traditional computer data such as text and graphics, they'll also be able to manipulate information dependent on synchronization: time-based data



such as video, audio, animation and telecommunications. And those capabilities will all be integrated into a single, ready-to-use unit.

We'll be able to create our own home videos integrated with text and music. We'll be able to record ourselves singing the lead vocals to our favorite rock 'n roll classic with the original musicians playing along-or we'll add a timpani solo to our favorite opera. We'll be able to create performance art in our living rooms, narrate and score the family photo album, create a visual family tree, keep a video journal of the places we've visited, play an adventure game set in the house in which we grew up. The opportunities for personal expression, entertainment and education are unlimited.

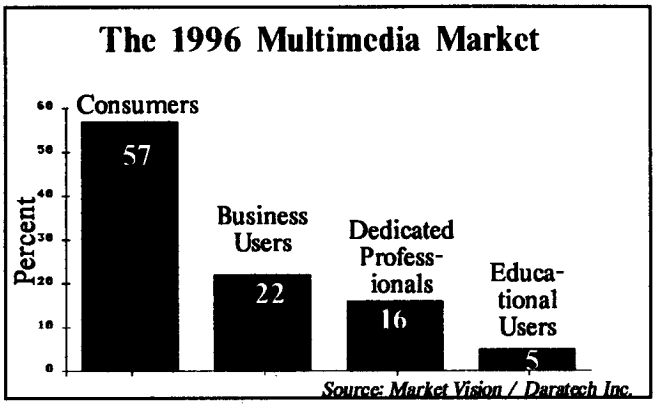
Daratech, a market research firm in Cambridge, Massachusetts, confirms this trend, predicting that by 1996, 57% of the U.S. multimedia market's $12.4 billion revenue will be generated by general consumer users.

The Impact of Personal Integrated Media

William B. Weltry of Volpe, Welty & Company, San Francisco, California cited an ideal example of the use of personal integrated media.

My father died before my sons were old enough to know him well. I was saddened by his passing but equally sad that an intergenerational passing of knowledge, wisdom and information about an earlier way of life did not occur. I listened to his stories; I heard about the purchase of his first new car, but my sons never did.

But maybe they can now. I have a hundred or so black and white photographs of him at various ages, in various locations. Here's what I'd like to do. Scan in an image of my father at age eighteen. Colorize the image. Scan in a photograph of that 1940 Mercury convertible. He said he'd put eight coats of hand-rubbed red lacquer on that car. Colorize the image. Combine the images of



my father and his car. Use a software package to animate and coordinate his facial movements and type in the story I remember him telling me about that car and about how great it felt to drive it with the top down on a warm evening in June. Play the script. The typing becomes a voice and the picture is now a full—color, full—motion photorealistic image speaking the words I've remembered. No, the voice isn't quite the right pitch or timbre, so I alter it.

There, that's it. Hand the optical disc to my son. He's eighteen now; maybe there's something he and his grandfather can have in common. Maybe there are lessons my son can learn from his grandfather. Maybe we can alter our place in time and space.

But what kind of equipment will Welty need? Nothing available today can accomplish the task, but the issues are beginning to be addressed. And as the market matures, consumer demand will drive development even further.

Currently the market is filled with multimedia machines designed and priced for business users-From IBM's Ultimedia at approximately $8,500 to Tandy's 386 machine at $3,999, Acer's telephone-equipped PAC for $2,695 and Apple's 68030-based LCII with video upgrade for $1,898. For personal integrated media to become ubiquitous and make interactive information widely available to the public, the entry price must be much lower, and the features must be both relevant and abundant. "People are not going to spend $2,500 to play games that look and sound better on a $200 Nintendo," said Peter Blakeney of IBM.

Some low-cost, low-feature machines are available. The Amiga 500 is a bare bones 68000-based machine available for less than $700. While it will allow users to perform rudimentary video manipulation, it has limited speed and color capability, and poor sound quality.

Commodore has introduced a home multimedia player, the Commodore Dynamic Total Vision (CDTV). Available for $799, the system is essentially an Amiga with a built-in compact disc player. Sales of the CDTV have been sluggish, largely due to the Amiga's limitations.

Some new entries claim to be multimedia but don't necessarily deliver the capabilities. Sega's new add-on for its game system features a compact disc player but doesn't provide users with enough flexibility or an accessible central processor.

Again, what the market needs is an affordable machine with high-functionality: a machine designed for personal integrated media that provides realistic video, high quality audio, simple operation and interesting personal applications.

Atari Corporation Introduces a Personal Integrated Media Machine

Atari Corporation has introduced the first computer designed for personal integrated media; we call it the Atari Falcon030™. Incorporating the same technical philosophy that makes Atari one of the best selling desktop-publishing computers in Germany, the new Atari Falcon030 provides personal integrated media capabilities at a reasonable price.

The Atari Falcon030 is an easy-to-use and easy-to-buy system. It incorporates technical advances-usually reserved for expensive professional film and video production workstations-as standard features.

Based on a 16 MHz 68030 processor, the Atari Falcon030 incorporates a specialized 32 MHz digital signal processing (DSP) chip for quick manipulation of sound and videos. DSP augments the power of the central processor and independently completes a variety of tasks without slowing down the system. The CPU is left free to perform those tasks it does best.

DSP is especially valuable for sound manipulation. Capabilities include graphic equalization, channel manipulation, surround sound and special effects such as echo, flange, chorus and reverberation. In addition, DSP makes voice recognition for input/output possible.

Another Atari Falcon030 advantage is its Direct Memory Access (DMA). A standard feature of Atari systems, DMA speeds access to peripherals including hard disk drives, compact disc players and laser printers. In addition, Atari's proprietary memory control system wisely manages video functions. Other vendors require dedicated video RAM, usually stored on an additional video card, to quickly transfer display-related information. The Atari accelerates update and manipulation instructions without any expensive add-ins.

Other features giving Atari Falcon030 users immediate access to personal integrated media capabilities include:

- Atari's graphic environment manager (GEM) and built-in graphics co-processor
- A true color mode that includes more than 65,000 colors, twice the capability of the Apple Macintosh LCII

- The industry's only standard-equipped MIDI input/output ports
- 16-bit stereo sound-input and output-for the highest quality reproduction available at sample rates up to 50 kHz
- External video sync for high quality genlocking
- Overlay mode for easy video titling and special effects
- Software applications for personal integrated media applications such as desktop video production, animation, music and entertainment

No other computer can provide this level of performance and personal integrated media capabilities for a more economical price.

Atari Falcon030
Personal Integrated Media Applications

There are as many types of applications for personal integrated media as there are users: everything from individual video productions, such as the one foreseen by Bill Welty for his son, to in-depth training programs that will help increase literacy worldwide. Some examples of personal integrated media applications already available or under development for the Atari Falcon030 are described within the following key categories.

Desktop Video

Professional quality video and animation production has been inaccessible to the mainstream personal computer user because of prohibitive costs and intricate equipment. Now, the Atari Falcon030's specialized production features, including superior display technology-thanks to the DSP and graphics co-processor-makes these production capabilities immediately available.

Use desktop video to make that childhood dream of becoming a professional ball player come true. With personal integrated media equipment, users can change their softball team's home video into a major league sporting event. They can add color commentary and a play-by-play, create team graphics, a scoreboard, individual stats and league standards. They can even break away for station identification and show beer, sneaker and car commercials.

Animation

"Animation is especially good at grabbing attention, condensing information that occurs over time, engaging the emotions, simplifying the learning process, and allowing viewers to digest complex material quickly," wrote Anita Amirrezvani, in The San Francisco Examiner. Now users can create their own cartoon messages.

Imagine sending a cartoon instead of a card: animate birthday, holiday and special occasion greetings. Or animate a favorite cartoon strip or comic book to bring superheroes to life. Entertain friends and family, or teach a cub scout pack about the importance of teamwork with a custom cartoon made just for them.

Desktop Photo Library

Create photo albums unlike any you've seen before with an Atari Falcon030 and Kodak's Photo-CD Access System technology. By transferring personal photos to digital compact disc photos, users can view, sort and manipulate photographs, even move a picture of themselves in one place, to a completely different photograph.

More traditional users can add titles or verbal descriptions to vacation photos so they don't forget where or when the photos were taken, or what they were thinking about when they looked into the camera.

Presentations

Presentation tools have evolved from simple stark visuals to complex, multiple-input components requiring central coordination. The Atari Falcon030 makes it possible to author and coordinate exciting presentations at a reasonable cost. Even basic databases can become sophisticated presentations with the addition of hypertext documents, interactive screens and more.

Combine data and text with graphics, animation and sound elements into a storybook presentation for children. Users as young as three can play along, clicking on pictures that lead to hidden delights, and learning to identify sounds, objects and words. Children can even use the Atari Falcon030 to create their own presentations for school projects.

Telecommunications

Voice and data communications have been revolutionized in the last decade and more changes are on the way. The Atari Falcon030 can make new technology available to users, immediately, from graphically enhanced bulletin-board communications to interactive video phone systems.

Users can communicate with other personal integrated media users around the globe, not only through unformatted type, but with complete graphic pictures, full-motion video and crystal clear sound. The Atari Falcon030 makes the video phone an affordable reality.

Music/Audio

Atari is the only commercially-available MIDI-ready computer; it has already helped revolutionize the music industry and has been endorsed by many artists including Mick Fleetwood and Madonna. The Atari Falcon030 makes professional-level recording and manipulation even more accessible to the general public, eliminating the need for expensive additional hardware.

In their own homes, users can record music based on classics or original compositions. They can add spe-

cial effects previously found only in expensive machines: graphic equalization, surround sound, harmonizing, reverberation and echo. Users can remove the lead vocals and create their own Karaoke machine and those wanting to learn more about music can run programs that not only explain music theory, but let them hear the differences and experiment on their own.

A Sample of the Personal Integrated Media Applications Available for the Atari Falcon030

Auto•Art by SKWare One: A program to automatically generate artforms that can add excitement and texture to video art. The art is all created mathematically, but no understanding of math is required to be fascinated by the visual delights produced.

Chronos-3D Key Frame Animator by Lexicor: Animation software that combines powerful animation features and quality rendering in an easy-to-use package. Sophisticated features include *morphing* to transform one object to another, *cycle* to replace the motion of a single object with a series of objects, and *visibility* to create fades and motion blur.

eSTeem PILOT by eSTeem, Inc.: An easy-to-use personal integrated media authoring language to create self-running presentations or interactive modules with text, graphics, sounds and full graphic capabilities.

Genesis: The Galactic Tool Chest by Lexicor Software: A collection of special effects programs to create stunning 3D space animations. Build your own planets, 3D landscapes, and moving starfield generators for the classic faster than light effect used in space dramas.

HyperLINK by JMG Software International: a relational database and application generator with hypertext links to control buttons, text, graphics, sounds and external programs.

InShape 1.0 Modeler and Shader by InShape Softwareentwicklung: A graphics program for modeling and generating 3D scenes.

Kodak Photo-CD Access System by Color Concepts: Incorporating Kodak's technology for storing 35mm photographs on compact disc, the Color Concepts' program allows users to view, sort and manipulate their photos on the Atari Falcon030.

MEM from The Department of Psychology, University of Glessen: A hypermedia system for developing and conducting computer-aided instruction. MEM displays text, pictures, and sequences of pictures in dynamic windows-all to explain unknown concepts to users at the press of a button.

Mona Lisa by Lexicor Software: A true color and animation program featuring simple but powerful paint tools including spray paint, blending, splines, copy and paste.

OverLay Title Generator by System Solutions: A video title generator that works in all resolutions. Images of different sizes and colors can be loaded, changed and saved with ease.

Prism Render by Lexicor Software: Use this photorealistic rendering utility to create lifelike images on the computer.

SoundScope II from The Sydney Conservatorium of Music: This music education program encapsulates elements of music, animation, synthesized music, text, static graphics and speech.

Video Titler by Laser Distribution: A home video titling package that allows users to set up sequences of titles for their home video recordings. It includes a wide range of effects including scroll, flip and interlock.

The Growth of Personal Integrated Media

There's no doubt that the impact of personal integrated media in our everyday lives will continue to increase. Modern society is quick to embrace useful tools: it took 20 years for one million people to have telephones in their homes, but only two years for one million people to own cellular telephones.

The technologies encompassed by the umbrella phrase "multimedia" will continue to develop and affect our business lives. Expensive, high-end systems will continue to be needed for advanced film and video production, as well as new business applications. But personal integrated media will also grow, providing users with useful and ingenious ways to improve their daily lives.

However, for mass acceptance, personal integrated media systems will need to provide the basic requirements outlined in the beginning of this report:

- Photographic-quality images
- High quality audio reproduction
- Ready and easy-to-use for immediate gratification
- Interesting, easy-to-use software applications for personal use
- Value for the consumer's money

The Atari Falcon030 is the first entry that meets these criteria.

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WAACE Atarifest '92

Good Health AND Spirits

by Dave Parsons

Sheraton Hotel in Reston VA once more served as the site of the 1992 WAACE Atarifest.

It was 09 October 1991 when our phone rang, which it does a lot at our house, and my wife Debbie answered it. I was busy trying to figure out how I could convince her that we really needed to buy some new software or try to update some of our old stuff at the '91 AtariFest. We had attended the 1990 'Fest last year but, we were on a tighter budget then because we were a one income family and the Army does not pay as well as it should.

I could hear her talking to one of her Girl Scout leaders, Kathy. "Oh no! That's too bad," she said, "I'll try to get Dave to take your place." Immediately I had a sinking feeling about my plans for the '91 AtariFest. I knew that the Ft. Meade Girl Scouts had a campout planned at Gunpowder Park the same dates as the "Fest" so I thought I would be going to the Fest stag. (No self control on the checkbook!) "What do you mean she broke her toe!?" RATS!!! (¡*%¤&¢!) I was next in line to go because I'm an adult Girl Scout leader for the Ft. Meade Girl Scouts.

Anyway, that was last year. I tried to make up for the missed event and bought the TOS 1.4 upgrade from the good people at TOAD Computers during the summer of '92 and had recently purchased a Supra Drive 30MB from a friend of mine. I was just beginning to get it setup. I felt as if my friendly old Atari 1040ST and I were beginning to stagnate. I had not bought anything for it (us?) in so long, I really needed to "get back into it." After all, I have two teenage daughters (Jennifer, 15 and Theresa, 13) and a nephew (Steven, 13) at home. Their school assignments are becoming more and more important and the ST will soon be getting a real workout.

I called the president of MAST (Meade Atari ST) John Corkran and asked if we were going to have a booth this year. The answer was no, so I called Joe Waters to see if maybe I could volunteer to help out in the CN booth. I had met Mr. Waters at TOAD Computers when I was getting my TOS 1.4 installed. He said that he probably could use some help this year. Then he asked "The Question" ... "How's your writing, Dave?" I think I said something like, "Uh,... Most people can read my handwriting." But, this wasn't what he was looking for! "Dave, how would you like to write an article about the WAACE AtariFest?" Who?! Me!? Cover the AtariFest for *Current Notes*! I haven't had a written assignment like this since high school! I swallowed hard and gave a feeble ... OK, I'll give it a try.

I called my friend, Wyatt, and asked if he would be interested in coming to the AtariFest with me. Wyatt is one of those real electronics and computer gurus who knows all the goes-in-ta's and goes-outta's of the in-sides-of almost anything. (He's my technical expert!) Great! We planned the trip so that we would arrive early enough to help set-up if necessary.

Wyatt's wife, Tammy, came along and so did my wife, Deb. Tammy had just published a newsletter for her neighborhood housing area. My wife thinks that our computer is just an expensive toy that could be replaced by a typewriter and an AtariVideo game machine, although she uses a computer and a modem at work! Maybe some of Tammys' enthusiasm will rub off on her. We all packed up. My eldest baby-sat his kids, my nephew came along to play video games in the game room and we were off to the Fest! [Note: for a woman's view of the 'fest, see Tammy's report elsewhere in this issue. -JW]

WAACE Atarifest '92

If you've never been to an AtariFest, you're missing out on one of the greatest Atari events there is! The WAACE AtariFest is almost ideal as far as its physical set up and arrangement. The ground floor of the Sheraton-Reston Hotel is a giant "U-shape" with the top of the "U" capped off. The central part of the "U" has a pool and garden. Nice. The lower or rounded part contains the seminar rooms and the top is where the

main exhibit area is located. A few vendors expressed a need for more room, but I have never been to a show of any kind where this isn't so. At any rate, everyone seemed at least, well, comfortable.

After registering at the door, I headed for the exhibit room to check in with Joe. There I met a couple of the Waters clan, Joyce, his wife, Cindy, one of his daughters, and her friend, Renee. After the introductions, Joe said he would like me to man the booth from 1 to 5 p.m. Great! A chance to browse around and chat with some of the Atari world biggies.

Swap Room Bargains

First, I made a dash for the "Swap Room!" Some of the greatest deals you'll ever make can be made in the swap room. Since I had arrived at 9:30 a.m., I figured I had a jump on the crowds. When I walked into the swap room there must have been 75 people moving and milling around, trying to see what others had brought to sell and trade. I almost immediately found a Supra Drive 30MB with a pass-through and clock for the extremely reasonable price of $150!

"SOLD!" I announced loudly. "Who's selling this! I want it!"

A pleasant young man said it was his and that he would be glad to sell it to me. Fine, I said. Pulling out my check book I asked who to make it out to. I suddenly found myself extremely disappointed. He wouldn't take a check. He explained that another man had wanted to pay with a check earlier and he had also refused to take a check from him so he had left. I offered to send him a cashiers check or a money order and proceeded to give him my name address and phone number. I thought he agreed because he put the drive under the table. Feeling I might have made a deal, I pressed on to look around for more deals. I found a 2.5MB Z-Ram board, minus the chips, and a PC Ditto II board (both new in their boxes) for $20.00 each. Yeah, I know. Buyer beware! But if they didn't work, I was only $20.00 disappointed.

I also found *Timeworks DTP V1.1* for $20.00. Old, yes. But I'm still trying to save a buck. Later, I upgraded it to V2.0 for $70.00! Not bad, eh! Yeah, I know, it's not the best, but, it "works for me!" I made a couple of other small deals and finally left the room about $150.00 lighter, not counting the Supra Drive I would have to get a "Good Check" for later. He later sold it to the first guy who had managed to come up with the cash! (*&#¢!) That's life I guess. Some will take checks and some won't.

Saturday Seminars

Moving on through the hallways, I began to check the schedules for the seminars. This is a really nice place! "It's a Small World" by Dave Small of Gadgets by Small was up to bat first. Next was "The 30 Second Commute" by Don and Carole Terp to explain how they run a business out of their home with the help of Atari computers and DTP hardware and software. "Tele-media on the Atari Platform" was next, by Charles Smeton of Joppa Software Dev. Then it was "Professional CADD Using DynaCADD" by Sheldon Winick of Computer Studio, "A Few Little Extras for Your ST" by Steve Cohen of Wizztronics, "EditTrack Gold" by Jeff Naideau of Barefoot Software, "Fun With Calamus SL" by Mario Georgiou of DMC Software, "The Online Experience" with representatives from Compuserve, GEnie, and Delphi to explain what it takes to get online, and, finally, the *ST Report* publisher and staff talked about their online magazine and Atari views. Phew ... what a list.

Vendors, Vendors, Vendors

Then there is the "Main Exhibit Room." OK, I gotta be fair so I'll just try to list everyone in the Main Exhibit room in alphabetical order, (that's how they were listed in the Fest Program Guide!) and try to say a little about each, if I can.

The MIDI room showed off the great music that can come from the Atari.

ABC Solutions is where I got my *Timeworks DTP* from the swap room upgraded to the newest version for just $70.00! As a matter of fact, they had received a new master disk just last week and had them on-hand to pass on with the up grade! They also exchanged all my Canadian coins for good old American currency. Talk about service!

Accusoft carried a line of PD/SW and an extensive graphics disk collection.

A&D Software had the ever popular *Universal Item Selector III* (V3.32) for just $20.00. Had to get it. They also had *Universal NETware* and the *ST Informer* magazine.

ASTMUM is a users group from Montreal, Canada specializing in the arts and PD/SW.

Atari Interface Magazine was there signing up new subscribers along with Ben Poehland who was introducing the new *Atari Classics* magazine for 8-bit Atari owners.

BaggettaWare carried educational software for children and adults along with a neat comic book cataloger.

Barefoot Software had good old *MIDI Maze*, the shoot a happy face game, along with *EditTrack Platinum*, (this is the newest version and looks great!) and *GenEdit 2*.

I had mixed feelings about Branch Always and their *Gemula-*

Some truly stunning Falcon030 graphics were shown at the Lexicor booth.

Gribnif Software always has some neat items that interest almost anyone. This year's hits were *NeoDesk*, *Cardfile III*, *XBoot 3*, and their graphics software.

JMG carries *HyperLINK*, an applications generator that allows you to link text, data, graphics, and sound. The use of graphics, boxes, and buttons really makes it flashy.

Joppa Computer Products had a little of everything in their store on-hand. They also sold about a half a dozen of the Infinity Floptical 21MB drives by PLI. Entertainment software was abundant and STraight FAX sold at show prices.

Fans into animation software were thrilled with the power of Lexicore Software Corporations' *Phase-4* and *Chronos Keyframe Animator.* They demonstrated graphics and animations you'd swear were studio quality.

If you had been looking for a Trackmouse, entertainment software, or other hardware needs, Mars Merchandising had it.

Unfortunately, Maxwell CPU didn't show this year. My nephew probably would have loved their *Silhouette* autoracing routine. Oh well, maybe next year if I'm still here in the States.

Megatype had just about every font ever imaginable. They specialize in DTP type faces and also carry *Font Designer* and *Fontverter.* (Guess what these programs do!)

Missionware Software sold the telecommunications program *Flash II*, a lottery number generator called *Lottodds* and a nifty accessory called *Printer Initializer.*

The host of the WAACE was NOVATARI or the Northern Virginia Atari users group. They carry the CN library disks also and were busy signing up new members.

Oregon Research has what is probably one of the best back-up utility programs you can get for the money. *Diamond Back II* was another of those programs I'll put on my Christmas wish list. *Diamond Edge*, a disk diagnostics, repair optimization, and data recovery tool and the *Ultimate Virus Killer* were two other fine products from out west.

If you're in the Ohio neighborhood, Rising Star is the place to take your hardware, software, and, repair needs.

SAAUG is the Scranton Area Atari Users Group. They had a good library of PD/SW disks available and also operate a 24-hour-a-day BBS with lots of the latest PD/SW.

SKware One had 20-30% savings on their graphics software including *Seurat* and *Colorscan.*

Step Ahead Software announced an IBM Windows version of their easy to use mailing list and mailmerge software called *Tracker/ST for Windows.* My techno-friend just might get one to review for the office. I hope they sell a million and put the money back into Atari product development. I would like to see more Atari software developed for the IBM owners so they can see Atari is not just "that game thing."

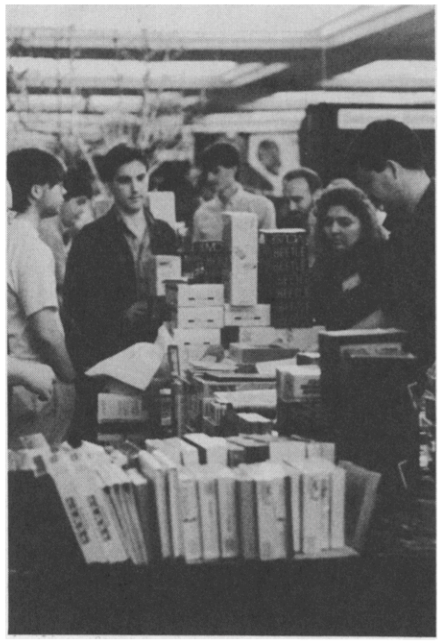
Speaking of development, if you want the latest books on programming, you could have picked up a copy of C-Manship Complete from Taylor Ridge Books. Maybe they will have more books next year.

Ah. Now for my favorite. Well, it's my favorite because they're local for me and people like Dave, Ray, and Jennifer are really helpfull when you have a problem with your computer. Toad Computers: The Atari Superstore (and friendly place) is just that. If they haven't got it, they'll get it. Famous Toad-Drives, ToadFiles, Toad-Hardware and lots of software.

Ever had a need for a good grammar/spelling checker? Well, Wintertree Software has what you need. Wintertree has *Spelling Sentry*, a desk accessory that will check word processor files and ASCII text, too. It even has a cut and paste feature.

Wizzworks carried that fun *Mug Shot* along with some new data disks. They also carried *Image Cat.* I found this to be a great little program for printing out a full sheet of thumbnail sized images so I don't have to search through a bunch of disks to find the right image for whatever I'm doing.

Wizztronics was set up right next to CN. These guys came up with a nifty little device that allows you to literally flip a switch and reboot in a different TOS. CartMaster is a multi-cartridge control system and Cartright is their cartridge



Toad Computers was busy selling Atari treasures all day.

tor, the Atari board for IBM machines, but they did sell to a few devoted Atarians who wanted to use some of their great Atari software at work because... "It'll run circles around the IBM stuff I have to work with." At least it will help keep the Atari software developers happy and busy. I don't think there were any IBM/DOS people there anyway. But, I looked at it and it seemed to work as advertised.

D.A. Brumleve brought her kid programs and educational software.

Clear Thinking was selling *EdHak v2.3* an excellent text, disk, and file editor.

CodeHead carried (and sold) a lot of their hot new *Warp 9* software accelerators along with their other fine products. This is one of the great deals I somehow missed. I really wanted one but forgot to pick it up! I wonder if they'll still sell me one at the show price?

CompuSeller West had an interesting product known as the *Macintosh ST Connection*, a powerful GEM-based program to transfer files to and from HFS disks. It also will read and write to hard disks, Syquest removable hard disk cartridges, and (if you've got one) the 1.44 MB floppy drive in your Atari, Mac Formatted High density floppy.

CompuServe was signing up people to their on-line services.

Computer Software Services is an 8-bit hardware and software group out of Rochester, N.Y. (Hmm ... I used to live there.)

Computer Studio (Ashville, NC) is a hardware and software retailer that also speaks MIDI to the musically inclined. They sold about 6 TTL 30's this weekend!

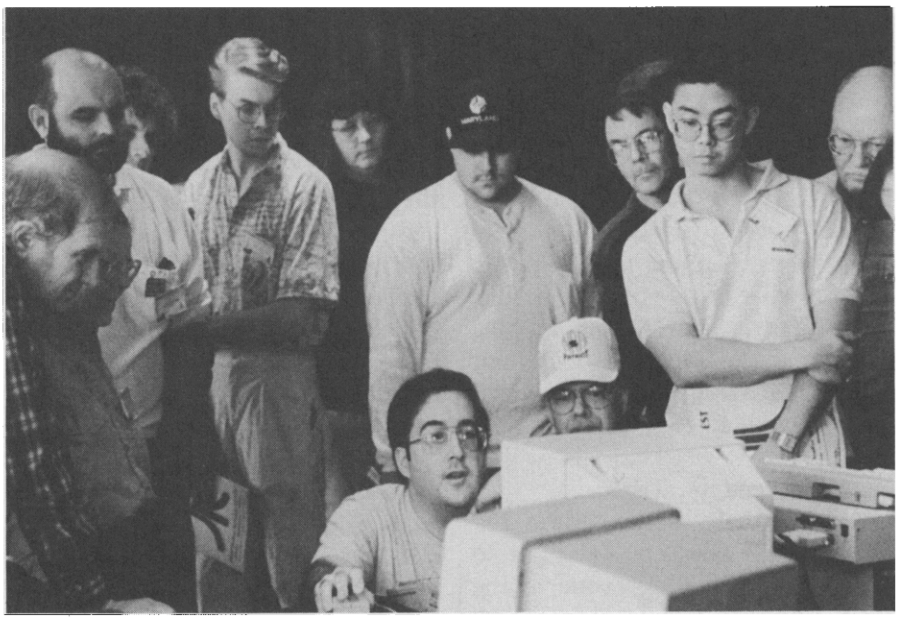
Current Notes was selling their famous CN Library of PD/SW disks and Syquest cartridges at low show prices and signing up new subscribers.

Andrzej Wrotniak was there representing Debonair Software for the star gazing and mathematical crowd with his *Star Base* and *El Cal* programs.

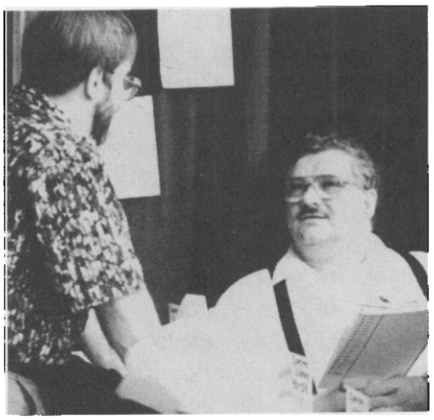
DELPHI, another popular on-line service, was there to drum up more users with their very affordable plan.

DMC Publishing was on hand with *Calamus*, *Calamus SL*, and *Invision*.

DragonWare Software had those fantastic Dragon Battery Kits and chargers for the Atari STacy owners. They also had *PowerNET*, a Local Area Networking (LAN) system for those of you lucky enough to have an Atari Office.



Dave Small shows off the new Atari Falcon030 to an attentive audience.



Joe Waters talks with one of CN's many subscribers who stopped by to say, "Hi."

eSTeem showed their GEM-based educational training system *PILOT* which now includes a shareware version known as *COPILOT*.

Fair Dinkum Technologies was drawing a crowd with their *Puzzle Pack* and the new *Cyberdrome Hoverjet Simulator*, an Atari ST/STe/TT action strategy game developed by RHEA-FX and sold exclusively by Fair Dinkum.

Fats Technology showed their hardware accelerators for several Atari machines.

Fouch Software demonstrated their *Mailing Manager ST*, a GEM-based program that is fast and easy to use and sold for a great price at the show.

This is the halfway point of the exhibitors. If anyone is still reading, raise your hand. Time for a break yet?

One of my favorite drooling spots was at Gadgets By Small. Dave was one of the few people who was lucky enough to receive a FALCON030 for development work. Not only that, Dave even put it on the table and actually let people touch it! Oooh! Fantastic machine! Dave also had all his latest hardware on display and was available to answer questions. A really nice personable kind-of-guy. (I gotta get promoted so I can afford some of his gadgets. Of course, I'll have to buy a FALCON first).

We can't forget GEnie. The online service carries over 26,000 Atari files and is very reasonable for all the services you get.

port extender for those cramped port areas.

Last on the list, but certainly far from least is Zubair Interfaces, Inc. Zubair had all his hardware there at really low prices. I picked up the chips I needed for the 2.5MB Z-Ram board I bought in the swap room. The 2.5MB, 4MB, and ST/ime clock chips were all on hand.

Man! My fingers are really getting sore. Almost done now.

Sunday Seminars

The Sunday seminars kicked off with "Cubase 3.0 Professional MIDI" by Mike Cloninger from Computer Studio. Really neat sounds. A talk on "Souping Up Your Old ST" was given by a panel made up of Jim Allen, Dave Small, and Dave Troy. I really wanted to attend this but was busy gathering info for this article. I guess I'll have to go bend Dave Troys' ear one of these days. Next was a bit on "Getting the Most from Your Modem and Telecomm Software" given by a panel of authors and users of some of the best available.

Then came what everyone came for. Stand back, drum roll please, the Atari FALCON has landed! Well, almost. It will be available soon! I couldn't get anyone to give me a price that I could put in print but, from what I saw, if there is any way you can, you owe it to yourself to go and at least see one. Take a towel to mop up the drool please! Unbelievable piece of computer craftsmanship. Flawless. Clean. Ahem ... Sorry. Almost got carried away.

Activity Rooms

You may think that this sounds like a lot to cram into a two day event but, that ain't all! I haven't even started on the Educational Room with all the educational software demos. The Game Room was a miniature mob of little people (and a few big ones too!). The MIDI Room atmosphere at times sounded like a philharmonic orchestra one minute and a rock band the next. Beautifully amazing. Demonstrations in the productivity room were a low buzz of work and light hearted enjoyment in a workable workplace environment ranging from CADD, and Spreadsheet talk to NETworks and Mail Managers. I wish my work place was as easily networked!

I guess this about wraps it up. If you missed it, you missed a lot! If there is an AtariFest of any type near you in the future, GO! Support the developers of hardware and software, and don't forget about those distributors and dealers. See ya next time. (I wonder if anyone else out there has a hard drive like the one I missed out on? Hey, call me!)

[David J. Parsons is a Staff Sergeant (SSG) in the U.S. ARMY assigned to A Co. 742d Military Intelligence Battalion at Ft. Meade, MD. Dave can be reached at (410)-674-5837.]

Bill Rehbock of Atari Corp., guest speaker at the AtariFest banquet, showed off the Falcon030 and explained Atari's new target markets.

AtariFest '92
A Woman's View
by Tammy Drucker

Here it is another October in the D.C. area. This is the fifth year I have had the pleasure of attending WAACE's AtariFest. This is also the first time that I've attended both days. I went both days for two reasons; one to make vendors rich and two because it was FUN. This year, to satisfy my curiosity, I spent more time than ever with the vendors talking with them about their products, ideas, and, most importantly, their impressions about Atari and the new Falcon. I came away from all of them convinced that the Atari Falcon might actually come out swinging and reclaim its rightful place in the market.

The people in attendance on Saturday seemed as if their money was burning a hole in their pockets. I couldn't tell that there is a recession going on! Luckily, one of the nicest things about the Fest are the inexpensive upgrades. I'm never quite certain if I am using the most current version, but all I need do is bring in an original disk and the vendors are more than helpful.

While it seemed as if the crowd was smaller than the previous years, the numbers were the same as last year. I guess that it just seemed that last year was more crowded since I was on crutches. I also think that the people spaced themselves throughout the day better this year than last. At least the vendors hadn't pulled out all of their hair on Saturday.

The vendors and developers, while always friendly and personable, had the time this year, unlike the previous years, to talk with and explain software programs and games. Being a novice in the Desktop Publishing world, some terminology was still new and frightening for me, yet the representative from Megatype patiently explained font converters and I greatly appreciated it. DragonWare's Christopher W. Roberts gave my husband and me a tutorial on his product *G-Man* and explained *Font Scaleable Metric G-DOS*. Accusoft gets two thumbs up from me for having a three ring binder with complete samples of all their clip art so I could see exactly what was on each disk. I picked up some fantastic public domain clip art for my newsletter as well as at least three new fonts.

The only vendor I noticed missing from last year's show was Double Click Software. I understand DC was having problems but I hope DC recovers and remains a force in the Atari market. The vendors should be applauded for coming to WAACE from as far away as California, Washington State, and Canada. I would be willing to bet that the other "PC" world doesn't have this type of dedication from its vendors and developers.

Another highlight of the Fest was the MIDI room. Even if you have the musical expertise of a goldfish this is a must see event. I do mean event since I heard everything from rock to classical. Even if you see an Atari computer demonstrated in a concert like setting, it still seems unreal. Let me reassure you that it is very real. Barefoot Software has taken over for Hybrid Arts. Jeffrey Naideau was very helpful in pointing me in the right direction in the MIDI world. I predict that they will be around for quite a while.

This year I also spent a lot of time in the Swap Room. For those of you who have never been to a Fest, this room is nothing short of dreamland. Where else can you find wonderful deals like a Lynx complete with case, AC adapter and eight games for $80? If you like a wide variety of games this is the place for you. They usually have numerous utilities as well as 8-bit software. These and many more wonderful deals are at the Fest each and every year.

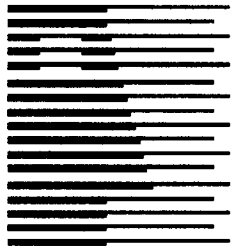
The Falcon030 did, in fact, land and was quite impressive (see October *Current Notes*.) The Falcon030 box is targeted more for the new Atari user than current Atari owners. But that may be an understatement because I am a current Mega ST owner and I would have purchased one at the Fest had they been available. Bill Rehbock gave a demonstration on Sunday and I don't ever recall an audience being as receptive. The visual show, complete with musical score, was absolutely spectacular. It would make a splendid commercial. (Hint, hint.) Although Jack Tramiel was not present at this year's WAACE, his voice was. I'm certain that the employees at Atari would have enjoyed the demonstration of the Falcon030 complete with Jack's voice saying first "no pay raises or bonuses" and then magically edited with the sound editing software standard on all Falcons to say there will be "pay raises and bonuses."

I hope that the Falcon can make that as much a financial reality as an audio reality for Atari. Unlike previous Atari boxes this is not just a marginal upgrade. This machine goes a long way toward bringing all potential "PC" buyers into the Atari fold. It competes head to head with other multi-media operating systems at a price performance ratio that my husband, a LAN administrator says the other manufacturers can't touch. I think that with the introduction of the Falcon, Atari has placed itself back on the globe. It seems almost impossible that so much machine can fit into one space-efficient package. Power without the Price has, once again, become the battle cry from Atari.

[Tammy Drucker is a housewife and part-time desktop publisher from Severn, MD.]

STARTING BLOCK
by
Richard Gunter

Hanging in There



Normally, I try to use the November column to highlight Christmas shopping ideas for Atarians. The approach of October tends to find me frantically trying to beat a deadline while trying to think two months ahead. This year's chaos finds me in a rather reflective mood that I decided to inflict on you.

Atari Corp. and the user community have been surfing the maelstrom for years now, and the storm warnings still fly. There's been rather a lot of used Atari equipment offered for sale on the BBSs and the commercial service I use, suggesting more Atarians departing the fold. Some developers are no more, and thinning of dealers' ranks continues to be reported. Sales of the long-awaited TT were unimpressive, and the machines hard to get. The second favorite sport of Atarians, by a wide margin, continues to be second-guessing of Atari's corporate management and policies.

The "year of Atari" somehow has slipped away from us to the point that Joe Waters suggested that 1992 should be considered the year of the Atari user. You can judge for yourself how well the *Current Notes* writers have responded to the editorial theme.

In my own life, professional pressures are forcing me to acquire one of those miserable Intel machines. The '486 configuration I'm considering will cost me a little more than my first ST system about five years ago. Assuming I proceed with the buy, it will have 8MB RAM, SuperVGA monitor, tape backup, some rather expensive office automation software, and other goodies. It won't have a printer, whereas my first ST configuration had (has) a laser printer, and the software accounts for a significant portion of the total bill.

The substantial cost for what is really a rather modest set of software reinforces something I've said before; you can't consider only the hardware, since any computer without software is nothing but a paperweight, or maybe a lousy boat anchor. To make matters even more confusing, a powerful Intel machine with a ton of RAM seems required to achieve the performance that I take for granted on my ST—running the old 8MHz 68000 chip.

Atari's ***hardware*** price advantage indeed has been eroded, if you compare a state of the industry machine with a comparably equipped Atari box. But I suggest the Atari *systems* are competitive at the checkbook level.

Does all the downer stuff mean that *I* am abandoning my trusty ST? Not a bit of it. It's a mature system, with widgets and utilities that I don't have at work. *MaxiFile* beats both *MS Windows* and *OS/2* File Managers, and Bill Aycock's file identifier is a tool I need right now at the office—alas, no such animal available to me.

That new clone will be ensconced in my living room; the Mega stays in its bedroom place of honor. I've also ordered an accelerator board for it, so I'm definitely hanging in there.

Hanging in there for several reasons. My ST does everything I need to do at home. Adding a good laser printer and more applications software to the clone purchase could easily run its price tag up another thousand or more, pushing the cost of replacing my Atari's functionality a bit higher than I want to handle. My Atari's performance is plenty adequate, with one exception: *Calamus* and *Outline Art* take a while to redraw the screen—hence that accelerator order.

Most important, I've had enormous FUN with my Atari. It remains the easiest system around to set up and use.

Sooner or later, there will be something I want to do that I can't, or support for the older machine will drop off to the point that I can't resist the urge to replace. With what will be the issue. I just don't like most of the alternatives, so I fervently hope that Atari and other innovators remain in the field. The industry needs the fresh breezes that just don't come from the giants.

Some Encouraging Developments

One thing I've found heartening has been the development of the 1992 WAACE AtariFest. Several months ago, some concerns were expressed in the local user groups over whether we should try to put on another show of the sort this one has become. Several key personnel had moved out of the (geographic) area; the state of the economy, some decline in user group memberships, and other factors contributed to these concerns.

We decided to give it a shot. By the time you read this, AtariFest '92 will be history, and you'll know whether I'm getting too little oxygen. At this writing, things seem to be shaping up quite well. There are actually more vendors planning to attend this year than

last, there's a lot of interest in putting on demonstrations, and a mounting level of confidence is in the air.

Atari has rolled out the Falcon, and from the specs it looks impressive. It's especially encouraging that developers seem to be pretty excited about it, and are bending their efforts toward software that will take advantage of its capabilities.

Other encouraging news is that we've been seeing a new influx of powerful products from Europe and even some new stuff from the US. Several of the new products are at the high end of the price scale, but are loaded with professionally oriented features. There's progress in networking, graphic arts, hypertext, and personal productivity products.

Upgrade or Bail Out?

Should a current Atari user consider upgrading to a new Atari, or bail out?

The first issue is whether to do anything at all. I'm opposed to replacing working equipment without a good reason; the shiny new red wagon is always a temptation, but I try to resist it until I can justify the acquisition. Depending on your changing needs, it may make more sense to enhance an existing system. But suppose you've decided the old Atari system just isn't right for you any more, and needs to be replaced. Should you get another Atari?

I think it's a little early yet. There are big changes occurring now in Atari's product offerings. The main thing is that older models are being discontinued in favor of the new Falcon line, which has been described by Atari spokespersons as the first of a series. It's got impressive features, including the exciting DSP chip, a 68030 processor, and better graphics than the ST line. Compatibility with existing software is said to be better than with the TT. I'd hope later models will offer greater speed than the initial 16MHz rate, and I'd like to see a detached keyboard model.

I know one individual who's eager to have the multi-tasking capability, and he'll probably buy a Falcon pretty soon. Others may want to wait for advent of software that they don't want to be without. Don't bail out yet.

Can I Still Recommend Atari to a New User?

The answer is a qualified *Yes*. We're talking here about home users rather than business institutions. The latter are probably stuck in the "mainstream" of IBM/clones or Apple, with a few who have specialized needs going with niche manufacturers. I think Atari's main market is still the home user, some small businesses, and a few vertical markets, such as music and publishing. So let's assume you're a home user looking to purchase your first serious computer.

First, analyze your needs in the most cold-bloodedly analytical way you can. Your **real** needs. The fact that you use a Brand X machine with Y software at work doesn't necessarily mean it's the best choice for home use; it may just be the laziest. Ask yourself whether compatibility with any particular platform or software product is a requirement or just a crutch. Figure out exactly what it is you want to do with your new computer.

Second, take a look at the Atari machines as well as the more widely used platforms. Ascertain which you find easier to use—more friendly. Compare the installation and setup of the alternatives, i.e., what does it take to go from an empty box to a usable system. Yeah, I know, your dealer will usually set it up for you, but it behooves you to know something about how it's done. Sooner or later, you will have to do it yourself, at least partially. And you will have to assume the responsibility for that system's care and feeding. An outside guru may not always be available.

Third, determine whether your present and planned needs can be met satisfactorily by Atari machines and software that will run on them. The Atari user community is small, and is likely to remain so. The supply of software will remain limited as compared to other platforms. *But*, the overwhelming size of other software catalogs may be misleading—there's a lot of junk out there. The total number of product choices you have *does not matter* if the right software for you is among them.

Fourth, consider cost. It's an important issue, especially for the home user. Your personal budget is likely to be a lot more limited than the typical corporate budget, so each dollar is more precious to you. As I found in my recent shopping venture, it's the total system cost that matters, not just the hardware. With that in mind, the Atari alternative is competitive.

Finally, consider the life expectancy of your system. How long can you realistically expect today's purchase to carry you?

Some industry analysts talk in terms of a three year life cycle. For home users, I think it's five years or more. Can you expect to obtain replacement parts, software, and support five years down the road? For the Atari alternative, this may be the most difficult question of all.

Whatever you may think of Atari corporate policy and business practices, they're still hanging in there and still trying. They're showing flashes of technical innovation, and that's good. Marketing, production, and the dealer network remain problems for them. Third party developers working in the Atari community include some highly talented and innovative people, even though they're struggling to make ends meet.

I think we can hang in there with them for a while longer.

The Junkyard Pussycat

by John Barnes

Collaboration, Not Competition

Early in the morning of Sunday, October 11th the Junkyard Pussycat and a number of other officers of Atari user groups gathered for a meeting to exchange experiences and, hopefully, to devise new ways to invigorate Atari user groups.

Leaders who could not handle the early wake-up call or who missed the overly discreet promotion that the meeting received added their names to the sign-up list later on. Groups from as far away as Michigan, Montreal, and Florida appeared among the 19 groups on the list.

One of the ground rules in the meeting called for total abstinence from mentioning Atari Corporation during the early going. This was intended to let people break away from the familiar old pattern of complaining about Atari's actions in the marketplace and wondering why the company does not do more for the groups.

It quickly became apparent that the groups represented at the meeting are operating largely in isolation from one another and from the larger user base.

The Need to Communicate

Almost everyone agreed that the first need is for better communication. There is a crying need for some sort of an information exchange to collate the available information, distribute it, and develop new information products.

Since the U.S. mail appears to be the only means of getting information to everyone, the first task will be to build a mailing list and produce a newsletter of some sort.

With this as a start the Pussycat hopes that the members can forge a coalition of user groups that will share experiences so that the less fortunate groups can try to replicate the successes of the more active ones. For the sake of argument let me give this coalition the name of "Atari User Information Central" (or Information Central for short). Don't bank on seeing that one anywhere, however, as someone is bound to come up with something better.

User group officers who read this column and who want to ally themselves with this effort can contact the Junkyard Pussycat at the addresses given at the end of this article.

An Agenda for Change

As the list grows, the members of the coalition will have to shape a set of goals and an agenda for achieving them. While this will be a challenge, it is by no means impossible. Volunteer effort has been part of the American scene from the days of the Minutemen, and a great deal of good has been accomplished.

The failure to solicit and act on input from the grass roots is, in the Pussycat's mind, one of the prime causes of failure in past efforts to unite the user base. Good ideas always benefit from additional thought.

In the past, most user groups had one of two goals: helping Atari Corp. sell product or getting Atari Corp. to help build group membership. The sentiment that it was best to be tied to Atari's apron strings was always present in some form or other. Nowadays, it seems pretty clear that Atari's apron strings are pretty tattered and the cupboard in Ma Atari's kitchen is pretty bare. It is time to go out into the real world and forage for oneself.

In more than a few cases in the past, the success of the group's efforts was measured in terms of favors bestowed or commercial advantage gained. It was not uncommon for user groups to act as appendages of dealerships. As long as new products were plentiful and the dealers cooperative, this helped to instill a sense of novelty. The supply of these kinds of goodies has virtually dried up and satisfaction will have to be the main reward.

Education and Help

Atari users will remain involved in the community only as long as they derive satisfaction from their involvement with the hardware and software that they are using and from the people who are sharing their experiences. The user groups can best fulfill these needs by educating, informing, and, yes, entertaining their members. These are the basics of the user group *raison d' etre.*

There are dozens of good stories on ways to do this. They need to be set down on paper and passed around to see what works and what does not.

The content of the educational process must accommodate the reality that most of the Atari comput-

ers ever sold are older models with, in many cases, limited capabilities. Many activists tend to lose sight of this as they explore ever more exotic hardware and software while souping up their machines or buying new ones.

There is another coterie of users who simply need help. Many of them are afraid to ask and it is often difficult to find the proper expert. User group leaders must learn to recognize the silent cries for assistance and find ways to fulfill this need.

The education process can be enhanced by the use of amateur videos or computer tutorials. The existence of a market in other user groups makes the effort of producing and distributing these worthwhile. The user group information exchange can recommend tools and techniques that produce good results.

Visibility

There are many tales of people who have bought Atari hardware without any awareness that there was a user group right in their home town. The mail order marketplace encourages this and the tendency of user groups to change officers without any public notification of a forwarding address means that published data is often in error. This leads to the loss of valuable contacts. The long-term result is that many user groups have become virtually invisible.

Information Central's first task must be to reverse this process.

Information Central's own list of member groups, packaged as an attractive flyer or pamphlet, might be a product that dealers would find useful. This would be a direct aid to visibility. Advertisements in other media pointing to the availability of this information would also help attract people who want to be part of a group but do not know where to find one.

A number of people have the rough stones of ideas on this subject, and a little collaborative polishing might yield some real gems. For example, the WAACE organization has shared its attendance data with mail order dealers and has contributed advertising material for direct mail campaigns in collaboration with these dealers. This has boosted awareness about the show, which has been many Atari users' first exposure to any kind of institutionalized activity.

Technology

For a group of people who are involved with something as high-tech as computers, the user community tends to be slow to take advantage of the empowerment that this technology provides. Very few groups make effective use of the available tools even for basic office automation or desktop publishing functions.

Many people shy away from electronic information services, whether they be local bulletin boards or international networks because of the learning curve and the cost. Atari BBS's that provide serious information are rare, but even the ones that do try to meet these needs operate with crude technology and software that is difficult for the sysop to configure and for the user to understand.

There is a serious need for education and the development of professional standards in this area.

Unfortunately, technology by way of the phone line does not come cheap. There are a great many people who recognize the value of such information exchanges but are prevented from accessing them by prohibitive toll charges or online fees.

The Sysops on the F-Net are an example of a group that has managed to set up a scheme that avoids some of these problems. The experts in this area need to lend a hand to make such communication available to more users.

Any level of hardware networking that takes place must, however, be supplemented by the kind of social "networking" that people in the business world practice so well. Interchanges and discussion on the personal level must be fostered.

The Pussycat was surprised at the number of participants in the meeting who did not avail themselves of electronic communication tools even though they are dedicated workers. The Pussycat has long suspected that the telecommunicators are a small fraction of the whole community and that those who wish to reach out must go beyond electronic means.

Interactions with the Media

At first glance publishing its own magazine might appear to be a valid project for Atari User Information Central. Actually, this would be a poor idea (OK, Joe, maybe I am trying to keep them from stealing your subscribers). Past experience (e.g. *Current Notes* and *AIM*) demonstrates that such enterprises soon metamorphose into businesses, thus creating a whole new set of demands. When that happens the survival of the magazine becomes paramount, and the problems of getting lively writing, developing a broad enough circulation, maintaining a production schedule, and attracting advertising revenue become all-consuming.

Information Central does, however, need visibility in the magazines and it should make effective use of them to advertise its products and to enhance its image as a force for good in the community.

Collaborations are possible in areas like consumer awareness, technical assistance, and news services. Atari magazines rarely have the staff or the cash to do an effective job of searching out all of the news and they often lack expertise on products that they are being asked to evaluate. Information Central, with its wide-ranging contacts should be able to help ferret out the right resources.

Independent online media like *ST Report* offer plenty of opportunity for volunteer participation and an outfit like Information Central might be able to help by providing accurate news and public information, especially about the groups themselves.

Unique Products

Even a consumer organization like Information Central can benefit both itself and the community by offering "products." Consumers' Union is one familiar example of ways to do this. Such products must be carefully chosen to enhance visibility and establish credibility while not poaching on the territory of established entrepreneurs.

Supporting initiatives that have already been undertaken by individual organizations within the community is a good starting point. Many of these ventures would benefit from the kinds of attention and support that Information Central can supply.

By combining resources and dividing up production tasks, the coalition can accomplish a great deal with the limited time and effort that volunteers can contribute.

Survival and Growth

Charles Darwin's "Survival of the Fittest" really applies to user groups just as it applies to other species. Although some tend to view mere survival as a rather undignified goal, it is actually a worthy one.

Those groups that take active steps to ensure that they satisfy their members, attract new blood, and pursue new ideas are the ones that are doing the best job of fulfilling their educational and social mission even as they guarantee their continued existence.

The time for reinventing wheels is past. It is now time to hook them together so that each can carry part of the load and provide part of the traction. Collaboration rather than competition is perhaps the only way to preserve those values that caring Atari users share among themselves.

To reply to this polemic:

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GEnie: J.D.Barnes
Delphi: JDBARNES
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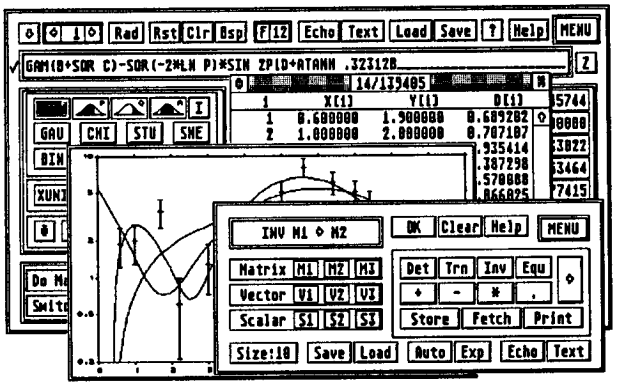

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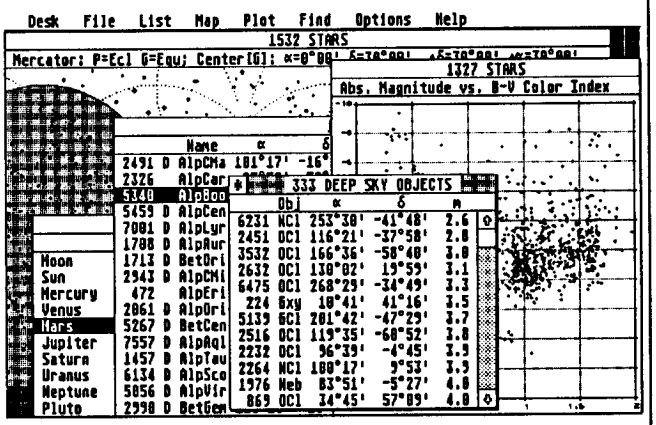

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Fun at the 'Fest, Falcon Hands-On, Flying Eyeballs, and Big, Big Images

by J. Andrzej Wrotniak

The Fest

Crowds at the AtariFest in Reston were better than many of us had expected. It was good to see that the Atari world is still alive and quite well.

On the other hand, it looks like Atari's policy of keeping their computers a secret continues to bring visible results: the only people who know of the existence of Atari computers are the ones who already have Atari computers, and the influx of fresh blood into our community is virtually nonexistent.

This seemed to be clearly reflected in the software vendors' sales. New products were selling quite briskly, while the ones introduced in earlier years were going very slowly. This was, at least, the opinion of the vendors I talked with. In one reported case, a new program brought more than 90% of sales, while four earlier ones (equally attractive, I would think), accounted for the remaining 10% or less.

Hanging out at the Debonair Software booth, I noticed the same thing. Without a new program on the market this year, we had a quite heavy update activity, but the only sales went to the folks who were undecided last year and now came back. Well, at least we broke even, and the number of enjoyable meetings and conversations with people who were dropping by were at least as good as in the previous years. Still, it is good to have a steady job, as miserable as it is.

Atari did the right thing this time, sending to the Fest their Mr. Bill Rehbock, who definitely was up to the task. His talk, featuring the new Falcon, was the main attraction of the banquet. It was nice to listen to someone equally as enthusiastic as technically competent, with an enjoyable choreography thrown in.

The Falcon

Comparing the Falcon of 1992 to the ST of 1985 may not be quite right. True, both machines are more advanced than most of the market is (or was at the moment), but here the similarity ends.

The ST was (and still is, even with its cutting edge dulled with time) a wonderful productivity machine, a general-purpose computer and a programmer's delight. The Falcon, on the other hand, targets quite a different segment of the buying market, excelling in sound- and image-processing applications.

This seems to be quite a smart move by Atari: instead of competing head-to-head with inferior (although CPU-wise powerful and well-entrenched) PC-clones, or instead of trying to bite a piece of MacIntosh's share, the company is turning in the direction of areas largely ignored by most of the manufacturers, until now accessible mostly by costly add-ons to other computers. Yes, there is the Amiga computer family, but, backed with the Falcon's performance and price, Mr. Tramiel may do to Amiga in 1993 what he did (while still with Commodore at that time) to Texas Instruments, Timex-Sinclair and many others back in 1983/84.

If the Falcon, indeed, gets to the market soon (well, October/November was the promise, read my lips!), and if it is supported by a healthy marketing push, then we can see some changes in our small Atariland. If things go well (they do not have to!), the Falcon buyers will consist of not just upgrading ST owners, but a quite new, first-time-Atari, crowd.

In spite of a different profile for many of the new Falcon users, and different target applications, we should profit from the growth of the Atari market. The reason is that Falcon, after all, happens to be software-compatible with our old machines: any Falcon *is also an ST.* Both segments of the user community will overlap and mix, and the "regular" application Atari market should also gain strength in the process.

Falcon Hands-On

Dorothy Brumleve, my regular AtariFest partner (no, we don't do each other's hair, this is just a rumor!), got a German version of the Falcon at the show. A regular ST-style case with 14 MBytes of RAM and a hard drive inside, believe it or not!

As soon as the Fest closed, we hooked it up and I was able to run some of my programs on it. Surprise, everything works, at least in the ST monochrome mode, except that some GEM dialog boxes have thicker borders than on the ST or TT, leaving thin lines on the screen after disappearing. Easy to fix (as a matter of fact, I did it the first night after the show), but the people who wrote the new version of GEM should have taken care of this incompatibility. Well, maybe nobody thought that a dialog box may have a "shadowed" attribute.

Still, my programs crashed in the color mode. The explanation turned out to be simple: we were running in 256 colors! This means that every pixel on the screen uses a full 8 bits (or one byte) of memory, while the ST uses just one (in monochrome), two (medium

Dorothy Brumleve proudly shows the new Falcon030 from Atari.

resolution) or at most four (low, also the new TT medium). Easy to fix, but (unless my programming is exceptionally cludgy) some other programs may show similar problems, not expecting more than two or four bits per pixel. On a Falcon these programs will have to be run in ST resolutions.

Snippets

The real fun will only begin when we start seeing programs making use of the Motorola DSP chip. This can be done even from a high-level language: a piece of DSP binary code may be stored somewhere in your program (as data), and all you need is to make a TOS system call, use the DSP to execute this code, and here is the address, thank you.

According to Mr. Rehbock, Motorola has released some useful pieces of the DSP code (snippets?) for everybody's free use. They can be encapsulated into high-level (C, Pascal, whatever) language procedures and then used as if they were parts of regular system libraries. Neat.

Updates

The Fest is an opportunity to update or upgrade some of your software; this is why so many people are walking around with boxes full of original distribution disks.

The Codeheads, having just demonstrated how a few nice polished touches and small fixes may improve an already good piece of software (*Quick ST*) brought the newest Version 3.73 of *Warp 9*. It adds, among others, a modular screen saver and improved configuration file handling.

In the *Microsoft Windows* world screen savers are a market craze now. You shell out $30 and use 2 MBytes of your hard disk space (yes, I've checked this!) just to spend countless office hours watching all those fish (or lollipops) swimming across your screen. Very entertaining and educational, almost as good as pet rocks.

Luckily, *Warp 9* does not go to extremes and I really like the program. Together with *NeoDesk* and *Universal III* (neither of these had or needed an update) it deserves a slot in every ST system.

Gribnif had Version 2.1 of *Neo CLI*, the command line interpreter that works with *NeoDesk*. This version includes (at long last, even DOS has it now!) a command history and many other improvements. This is the first CLI I may really use on my machine. One of my other favorite utilities, *XBoot*, also has a new version, but it is still in the mail and I have not seen it yet. (Other Gribnif developments: Dan Wilga's beard is still growing, and if you mistake Lisa for Tricia, she will call you Nevin, and you deserve it.)

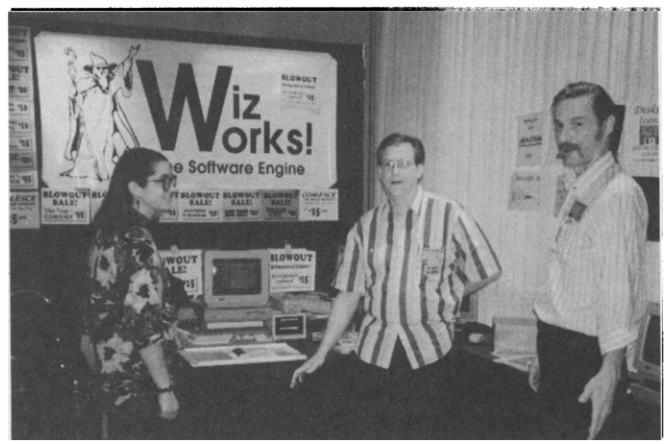
Dr. Bob's *MVG (Multi-Viewer Graphica)* has quite a few new modules added on, still remaining my favorite tool for translating images between various formats.

Finally, a newcomer to this year's Fest, ABC Solutions from Canada, brought not only an update to *Publisher II ST* (which they now distribute in North America) with quite a few bug fixes, but also a competent and nice looking presentation graphic package, *FirstGraph* (no space). Seeing it on the screen was enough to buy it, so expect a review soon.

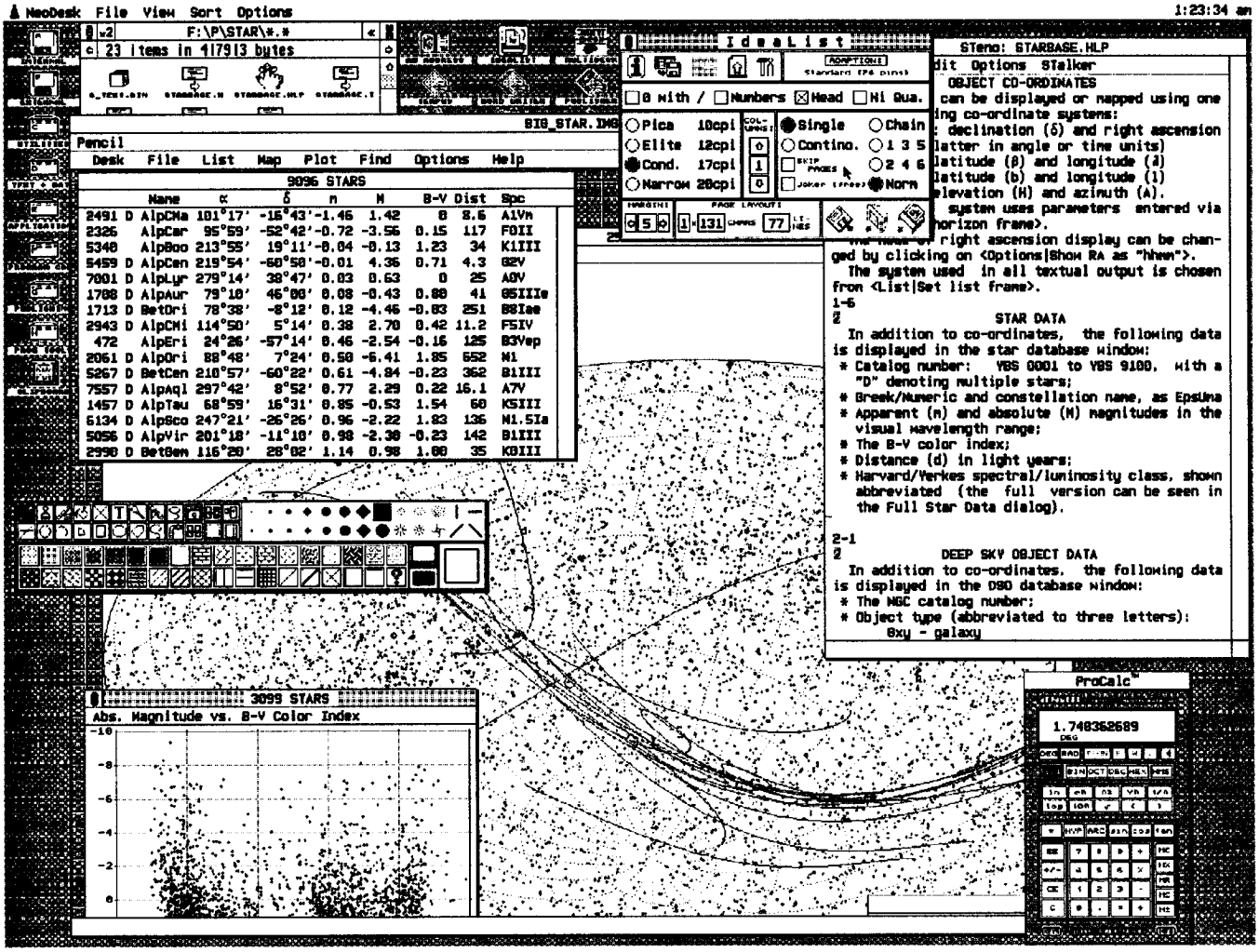
Regretfully, Double Click Software did not make it to Reston this year (see last month's Letters to the Editor). I hope Mike Vederman will put the company back on its feet soon; without Double Click, this small world of ours would not be the same.

Flying Eyeballs and Stuff

Chet Walters of WizWorks presented me with a tiny shrink-wrapped package with his *Ma Hubbard's Cupboard*. This is Yet Another Program-Launching



Wizworks offered a number of useful graphics tools and utilities.



Shell, although really simple to use and less intimidating than others. Really not much to write home about, but works just fine and comes in quite handy when placed as an icon on the *NeoDesk* desktop; parents configuring systems for their children may find it useful and child-proof.

You can configure the *Cupboard* so that when no user activity occurs for some time, it will load and execute a program of your choice, and Mr. Walters included, as an example, a kind of "screensaver" (note the quotes!): a cutsy little airplane flying back and forth across your monochrome screen, with a duck (?) in the pilot seat. What else would you expect from Mr. Whimsical himself, the man who wrote the shareware program with the little Fuji symbol spinning in the menu bar and with the moving mouse turning into a scared eyeball? (Nb. this program, *FujiMouse*, is also included on the *Cupboard* disk.)

Big, Big Screen Images

Remember *Monster* by Darek Mihocka, a small auto program fooling your ST (TOS 1.4 or higher) into thinking it's got a big screen? I found the program quite useful in testing the compatibility of my code with the big screen TT high (or Moniterm) resolution of 1280 by 960 pixels.

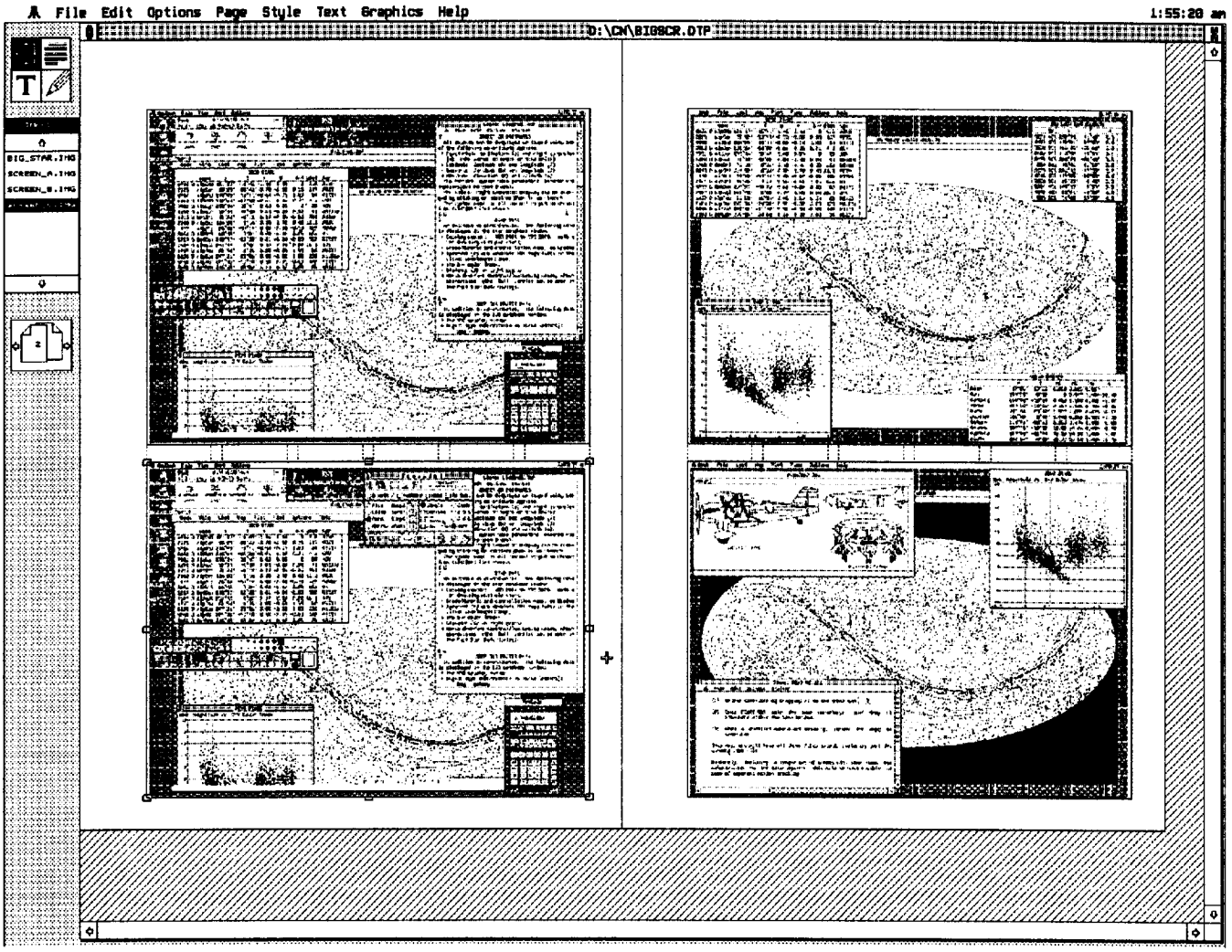
With this number of pixels, the jaggedness of lines caused by finite pixel size is much less visible. In this resolution, line plots and many other images would benefit greatly when being included into *Publisher II* or *Calamus* files.

Unfortunately, for the last two years I have not been able to find a screen snapshot utility that would save those big screens to disk for further use in desktop publishing programs.

Quite unexpectedly, I found it, of all possible places, on the *Ma Hubbard's Cupboard* disk!

You have to boot up with your regular monochrome monitor and with *Monster* in the \AUTO\ folder. The Wizworks' snapshot program, *TTPrSave*, can be then installed in memory by running it from the desktop (just once).

Now, while in any program and with a screen showing whatever you may want to save, press the right Shift and Help key (other key combinations may print the screen to a laser printer). Done: the big screen (not just what you see on your monitor, mind it, the whole 1280x960 pixels!) is saved to disk.



This is done in a Wizworks' proprietary .WWW format, but a separate utility to translate it into the common .IMG standard is also included, the extra step needed being just a minor nuisance.

To make things even nicer, *DC Shower*, which I have installed with *NeoDesk* to display all kinds of files on a double-click, handles the translated .IMG files on the fly while in the "normal" high resolution, displaying them reduced, but still quite readable. Looks like we are in business this time.

As a part of the test, I saved an impressive *Star Base* sky map screen, imported it into *Publisher II*, took it to work, read into *Publish It!* on a PC-clone and printed on an HP LaserJet as a whole page in the landscape format. The difference between this resolution and a regular 640x400 screen image is just stunning and well worth the $15 or so charged by WizWorks for the whole package (whether you use all the other things or not).

Imagine: a utility I was trying to get for at least two years, finally found on a *Ma Hubbard's Cupboard* disk, together with a duck flying a funky airplane, with some eyeballs thrown in? Isn't this a wonderful place?

Current Notes ST Library

PD/SW 44Mb Syquest Cartridges

$119.95

Those of you who own a Syquest 44Mb removable cartridge hard drive can obtain the Current Notes PD Library on Syquest cartridges. Each cartridge is filled with public domain and shareware software from the CN library. The following 6 cartridges are available:

Cart #1: #347-#459 *(Jul '89 - Jun '90)*

Cart #2: Spectre Coll *(80 Mac disks)*

Cart #3: #460-#554 *(Jul '90 - Apr '91)*

Cart #4: #555-#639 *(May '91 - Dec'91)*

Cart #5: DTP *(2000+ clip art, fonts, ..)*

Cart #6: #640-#709 *(Feb '92 - Jul '92)*

Order cartridges from CN Library, 122 N. Johnson Rd, Sterling, VA 20164 (703-450-4761). Note: any three cartridges (except #2) can be ordered on a single ICD tape for $119.95. (Add $3.00 for S&H per cartridge.)

Modems: Why Can't We Understand Them Anymore?

(C) 1992 David C. Troy

What Are Modems?

Modem is a pretty funny word when you first look at it. It's a compound geek-word, made from MODulator and DEModulator. And that's exactly what a modem does. Modems convert digital data into modulated (regulated) analog sound data and squirt it over a telephone line. The modem on the other end of the line demodulates the analog sound and converts it back into the digital data that your computer can understand. This ain't too hard. Think of it as an automated morse-code telegraph.

300 Baud-Alias v.21 and Bell 103

Back in the old days (10-15 years ago), modems went at speeds of 110 or 300 *baud.* Baud is another way of saying bits (1's or 0's, ON's or OFF's, clicks or non-clicks) per second. So when you're running at 300 baud, you're looking at roughly 37.5 bytes per second (eight bits per byte). That means that it would take a little more than a second to fill up one line of an Atari eight bit's text display (40 column screen).

If you listened carefully to a 300 baud modem transmitting data, you would hear two competing whistles, each warbling independently—each "blip" signifying a character being sent by one modem and received by the other. These blips were the product of an encoding scheme called "Frequency Shift Keying," or FSK. FSK utilizes four different specific frequencies. They can be thought of as "Modem A 1's ON," "Modem A 0's ON," "Modem B 1's ON" and "Modem B 0's ON". The modem thus has a way to continuously send and receive in either direction.

Bell Labs' particular FSK protocol for 300 baud is called **Bell 103**, and it dictates what four frequencies are used, as well as some other stuff.

The CCITT (French for Consultative Committee International Telephone & Telegraph) is the "metric system" of telephone standards. Set up by the United Nations, these guys get together in Paris every few years and decide "the way things should be" for communications protocols. In most of the free world their **v.21** standard is used for 300 baud rather than Bell 103. Most modems are capable of handling both Bell 103 and v.21. By the way, you'll notice that the U.S. Bell standards have the Bell name, and all CCITT standards have "v dot" names.

1200 Baud-AKA Bell 212A and v.22

When, in about 1983, 1200 baud modems became more popular, we heard a different sound on the telephone line. Because four times as much data was being transmitted every second (about 150 bytes per second as opposed to 37.5), a new, faster way of encoding the sounds had to be devised.

This new protocol is called "Differential Phase Shift Keying," or DPSK, and it uses a symbol keying, where four basic "symbols" may be used, and each symbol may represent two bits. Up to 600 symbols per second may be transmitted. And at two bits per symbol, that's 1200 bits per second.

If you listen to this working, it sounds like white noise. But the modem can decipher it perfectly. Again, we have the two standards-Bell 212A and v.22—and again, most modems will handle both. They work essentially the same way, but with different frequencies and timing.

2400 Baud-v.22bis

2400 Baud (circa 1985) marks the death of ma Bell's efforts at modem communications standards. From here on out, we work with only CCITT protocols. AT&T first did it out of necessity and then kept with it to get profits from potential licensing fees. But by 1985, the CCITT had surpassed them and it was clear that Bell wasn't going to own the entire telecommunications scene.

Quadrature Amplitude Modulation, or QAM, is what v.22bis utilizes. There are 16 possible "sound symbols," each signifying four bits. And up to 600 symbols per second may be transmitted. 600 symbols per second times 4 bits per symbol is 2400 bits per second.

2400 baud brings us up to 300 bytes per second–a pretty respectable speed.

We should probably note that these speculative, theoretical bytes-per-second ratings are akin to free-fall speeds. To continue with that analogy, you'd probably rather not free fall from 1 Mb high to the ground. You'd rather climb down a ladder, with steps, and check your

footing now and again. Software tranmission protocols provide that ladder for your modem and make sure that your data doesn't go splat. Obviously, this takes longer; the overhead of these protocols will lower your throughput from 300 characters per second (cps) at 2400 baud to something like 200 or 225. But 75-100 cps is a small price to pay for insured accuracy.

9600 Baud-v.32

9600 baud uses a combination of QAM (Quadrature Amplitude Modulation) and TCM (Trellis Coded Modulation). I don't have a lot of information on this protocol, but we know that it brings throughput up to 9600 bits per second-another quadrupling of speed.

HST-An Unfortunate Diversion

US Robotics, well before v.32 became the 9600 baud standard, came up with their HST (High Speed Technology) protocol. It allowed the same 9600 bit per second speed. For the past four years or so, HST has been a preferred standard among home bulletin board users. But now that v.32 has come into its own, many folks are replacing their HST modems with the standard v.32 variety modems. So yes, there is another 9600 baud standard, but it is becoming less and less relevant. In addition to their inexpensive HST modems, US Robotics makes what they call a dual-standard modem which is also compatible with the HST, v.32, and v.32bis protocols, and many people are using those during this transition.

14,400 Baud-v.32bis

The highest raw baud rate achievable on standard telephone lines today is 14,400 baud. 50% faster than 9600 baud, v.32bis uses the same type of encoding scheme as v.32, but it's just done faster.

Supra, US Robotics, Practical Peripherals, and many other companies now manufacture v.32bis compatible modems, most for under $300 (street price).

Ten years ago, few would have believed that we could achieve this kind of speed on standard telephone lines. But just wait—if you think that 14,400 baud (1800 cps) is ridiculous, just look at what we can do with data compression and error checking!

Error Correction

There are five error correction protocols currently supported by most state-of-the-art, v.32bis type modems. They are v.42 (also known as LAPM), MNP (Micronet Networking Protocol) levels 2 through 4, and MNP 10.

As you might have guessed, v.42 is the CCITT standard. MNP 2 (ok) through 4 (best) give different levels of quality, and their availability is dependent on your telephone line and modems. MNP 4 is what's typically available on online services such as CompuServe and GEnie.

Error correction works by computing a checksum (a unique code that is produced by a particular combination of bytes) for every few bytes of data and sending it to the other modem to confirm that the other modem received the bytes correctly. If the checksum is wrong, those few bytes are retransmitted. These error correction protocols can slow down data throughput slightly (if errors occur), but, on the average, they speed things up because you get automatic detection and correction of errors, meaning you don't get bad data.

Error correction will not cure a really noisy phone line however. It is primarily meant for the occasional bit of noise which might ruin your data. MNP 10 is, though, the "toughest" of the error correction protocols. It is meant for use on cellular telephone systems, and will provide error correction even in very adverse conditions. The price there is efficiency.

MNP 2-4 are relatively old, hence their availability on online services. The v.42 standard is newer.

Data Compression-Multiply Speeds by Two or Four

Even before low-cost 9600 and 14,400 baud modems were available it was possible to take your average v.22bis (2400 baud) modem and use data compression to achieve speeds of up to 9600 baud. (This is done in the Supra 2400+ modem.) There are two levels of data compression available.

The first is MNP 5, (note that MNP 2-4 and MNP 10 are error correction protocols, while MNP 5 is a data compression scheme). MNP 5 will provide a 2:1 ratio of data compression. So a text file, for instance, could be transmitted at a speed of 4800 baud on a 2400 baud modem with MNP 5.

The second, newer, CCITT data compression scheme is called v.42bis, which delivers a 4:1 compression ratio. That same text file on the same 2400 baud modem could be transmitted at up to 9600 baud when using v.42bis.

These data compression algorithms work much the same way as ARC or LZH do, and they do it on the fly. But have you ever tried to re-ARC an ARC file, hoping it will get smaller still? Common sense will tell you this doesn't work (or else the Library of Congress could be represented as one friendly byte, like 7F hex), and experience should tell you that re-compressing a compressed file frequently yields a bigger file than the original!

We can thus correctly draw the conclusion that data compression algorithms like MNP 5 and v.42bis will actually SLOW DOWN the transmission of previously compressed data files! And when you're downloading a file from a BBS or from GEnie, aren't they usually ARC'ed or LZH'd?

So what use does on-the-fly data compression have? It will speed up the transmission of uncompressed data, like text messages in a message base. It means that you don't *always* have to use ARC or LZH to transmit data. Basically

though, it means that a 2400 baud modem is still essentially a 2400 baud modem, with or without data compression, and thus the sheer muscle of v.32 9600 and v.32bis 14,400 baud protocols are necessary to achieve blinding speeds.

But wait! What happens when you apply MNP 5 and v.42bis data compression to 9600 and 14,400 baud modems? You get the same 2:1 and 4:1 compression ratios, effectively bringing transmission speeds (for previously uncompressed data) up to as much as 38,400 and 57,600 baud respectively. Gosh, that's fast! Again, you aren't going to get that speed all the time, but when your minimum speed is up from 2400 to 9600 or 14,400 baud, you're doing pretty good!

Speed Limits-No Free Falls Allowed!

57,600 baud sounds great, doesn't it? That's 7200 bytes per second (also known as 7K—ridiculous)! Well, on the ST, the Motorola 68901 controls the serial port, and its maximum speed is 19,200 baud. So if you want to look at it in terms of modem specs, you really can't take advantage of anything more than 9600 baud (v.32) with MNP 5 (2:1) data compression. But if you want the best muscle power, get the v.32bis 14.4K modem anyway. At least then you don't have to rely on data compression for speed, and if you talk to the modem at 19,200 baud, it won't try to go any faster than that.

Other computers (Mac's and PC's with special serial chips) can achieve the full 57,600 baud (which is hard to get anyway—remember that that requires sending an **uncompressed** file on a v.32bis modem with v.42bis data compression on) because their serial chips allow that kind of speed. There have been mods you can make to the ST to bump the speed up to 57K and above, but they are risky and aren't supported by TOS or modem programs anyway.

Don't worry that your ST can't go at 57,600 baud—you can get the same kind of speed by sending an ARC'ed file at 14,400 baud. The serial chips in the Mega STE, TT030 and Falcon support that speed, but the OS doesn't yet. If you care, hang tight. Mostly, data compression is just for lazy people.

As we said before, transfer protocols also limit speed (and errors). While it would, in theory, be possible to tell one computer to send a file at 57,600 baud and to tell the other one to receive it, if we had no protocol to regulate this transfer, you can bet that there would be lots of errors. Xmodem CRC (with 128 byte blocks), Xmodem 1K (with 1024 byte blocks), Ymodem (with 1024 byte blocks and batch capability) and Zmodem (with 2K blocks) are the most common. I have listed them in order of increasing speed. Zmodem is probably the "best" because it offers the largest block size and batch capability as well.

In practice, the fastest speed you can achieve on an ST with a good modem is about 2000 bytes per second. But if that's an ARC'ed file that was originally 3 times larger, you're really talking about 6000 bytes per second, which approaches the 7200 bytes per second of full 57,600 baud.

Terminal Programs

Terminal programs work in tandem with your local BBSs (Bulletin Board Systems) and online services to provide these software transfer protocols. *Flash, Flash II, Storm, Stealth, Interlink, GIME Term, Uniterm, Stalker 3, VanTerm,* and GEnie's *Aladdin* are a few of the most popular ST terminal programs.

Compatibility

Both your modem and the remote modem must have the same data compression and error correction capabilities for you to be able to take advantage of them. Having v.42bis data compression doesn't mean you automatically can go four times faster. The modem you're connecting to must have v.42bis also.

Two Speeds-Connection Rate and Computer Rate

Back in the old days, if two modems were connected at 1200 baud, it meant your terminal program (and computer's serial port) must also be set to 1200 baud.

Now, you may keep your computer set at 19,200 baud, and your modem will convert any lower speed data it receives into 19,200 baud for your computer. This is useful on the ST.

For instance, the official "Connection Rate" on a 9600 baud, MNP 5 connection is 9600 baud. But if you were to set your ST to 9600 baud also, there would be no way for you to take advantage of the increased speed that the data compression gives you. Thus, the "Computer Rate" of 19,200 baud allows for the full 2:1 increase in speed that MNP 5 can deliver. And when MNP 5 isn't doing anything, it can still work at 9600 baud.

Thus, the "Connection Rate" and the "Computer Rate" describe the upper and lower bounds of your transfer speed. It can't go below the connection rate, and it can't go above the computer rate (since the computer is the final destination of the data).

Handshaking

If the computer is running faster than the modem, there has to be some way for the computer to send stuff to the modem without the modem getting "backed up." (Picture the computer pouring water into a funnel that drains at a particular rate. There has to be a way for the funnel to tell the computer to wait so that the funnel doesn't overflow.) This communication is called "handshaking."

There are two ways to handle handshaking. The first is called hardware handshaking. In an RS232C (standard serial modem) connection, there are two signals

An Overview of Modem Speeds and Protocols

Data Protocols	*Basic Speed of Protocol*
Bell 103 / v.21	300 Baud US / European Standard
Bell 212A / v.22	1200 Baud US / European Standard
v.22bis	2400 Baud Worldwide Standard
v.32	9600 Baud Worldwide Standard
v.32bis	14,400 Baud Worldwide Standard
Error Correction	*In Order from Worst to Best*
MNP 2-4	Standard in the US - 4 is best
MNP 10	Meant for cellular use (very rugged)
v.42 (LAPM)	Worldwide standard (best)
Data Compression	*Shows Ratio of Compression (Avg)*
MNP 5	2:1 (On Uncompressed Data)
v.42bis (BTLZ)	4:1 (On Uncompressed Data)

Example A:

Supra v.32bis to Similar Modem

v.32bis (14,400 Baud)

+

v.42 LAPM Error Correction

+

v.42bis 4:1 Data Compression

=

Effective Throughput of up to 57,600 Baud with Error Correction

Example B:

Supra 2400+ Supra v.32bis

v.22bis (2,400 Baud)

+

MNP 4 Error Correction

+

v.42bis 4:1 Data Compression

=

Effective Throughput of up to 9,600 Baud with Error Correction

Combine different baud rates, data compression and error correction schemes and consider the type of data you will be sending. Figure out average speed for yourself!

important here; one is called CTS (clear to send), the other RTS (request to send). CTS is controlled by the modem and is turned ON when there is room in its funnel (data buffer). RTS is controlled by the computer and is ON when the computer has room in its buffer to receive data.

In low speed situations, RTS and CTS can be on all the time. But when there is a difference between the computer rate and physical connection rate, it is important that these lines be controlled so that each device knows when it can send data. So when the computer sends a giant spurt of data, larger than its buffer, CTS suddenly goes OFF and the computer will wait for CTS to go ON again before it sends more data. In a situation where the computer rate is twice as fast as the connection rate (19,200 to 9,600 baud with no data compression), we could see that CTS would have to be OFF about half the time.

Inferior to hardware handshaking is the software-based XON/XOFF system. XON and XOFF are ASCII characters 17 (Control-Q) and 19 (Control-S). You can see XON and XOFF at work when you display a file on your ST's screen. Press Control-S to pause (XOFF) and Control-Q to resume (XON). These characters can be used to tell the computer and modem to pause and resume as well.

The disadvantage to the use of XON/XOFF is that ASCII 17 and 19 are very likely to appear in most binary data files, and yes, these cameos can cause the modem or computer to get confused and out of sync. Hence, you should always try to use hardware handshaking when dealing with binary data files (like program or ARC files).

There are ways to use BOTH XON/XOFF and hardware handshaking. Some situations warrant this (when one or the other alone doesn't seem to work). But you will always have to use some form of handshaking when the computer rate is different from the connection rate.

There is a bug in TOS, in all versions, that screws up hardware handshaking on the main serial port. There are lots of fix programs available for TOS 1.4, 2.05, 2.06 and 3.06 that will tighten up this code. You will need this patch to take advantage of hardware handshaking.

Arbitration

When two modems call each other, before they connect they will tell each other what resources they each have available—their highest baud rate and whether they support error correction and data compression. The two modems will look at the available shared resources (and the phone line quality) and pick the best possible connection. This insures that you will always get the best connection possible.

If for some reason telephone line quality degrades (or gets better), most modems have the ability to decrease or increase baud rate on the fly. Your modem will tell you when you call another modem what the connection rate is, and if you tell it to, it can also tell you whether it's using error correction or data compression.

FAX Modems-Why not?

Almost all of the modems available today with v.32bis capability are also FAX modems. FAX is nothing more than a type of data transmission protocol, with its own command set and compression options.

There are different FAX protocols which allow speeds up to

14,400 baud (although most desktop FAX machines only go up to 9600 baud). The different protocols are v.21 channel 2 (300 baud), v.27ter and v.29 (9600 baud) and v.17 (14,400 baud). Most fax modems currently in production are Group 3 (like most fax machines) and Class 2 software compatible. Be careful though. Fax software designed for class 2 modems won't be totally compatible with a class 1 modem. (STraight FAX! requires a class 2 modem to use both send and receive capability).

FAX modems require special software like STraight FAX! to utilize their FAX features. They are not accessible to the average user via the AT command set.

Command Set

Hayes effectively established the modem command standard over 13 years ago with its Hayes 300 Smartmodem. It had its own processor (a Zilog Z8, I believe) that understood commands like "ATDT555-1212" (touch tone dial 555-1212). Since then, every major modem manufacturer has followed this standard and all modems respond to the same basic "AT" command set. Here's a short list of the most common AT commands.

AT	Yo, Modem, A Command Follows
D	Dial
T	Make that Touch tone
P	Make it a Pulse Dial
A	Answer the Phone
O	Go Online and act like you called someone
A/	Used in place of AT to repeat last AT command
H	Hang Up the phone
Q1	Turn off result codes (quiet mode)

Again, these are just a few commands. But they work just as well on a v.32bis 14,400 baud modem as they do on a Hayes Smartmodem 300 from 1980.

The End

That's all for modems. If you've been totally confused by all the v.32bis (bis means something akin to revision 2), MNP 5, data-compressin', error-correctin', tobacco-chewin', heat-packin', drug-dealin', acronym-usin', big and bad modems stalking the streets these days, know that I have been, too. Not until a month ago, when I sat down and sorted it all out, did it start to make sense. I hope it helps you out, too.

If you have any questions or comments about this article, please send them. I'd love to hear them. Happy modeming.

How to Reach Me:
Phone: (410) 544-6943
FAX: (410) 544-1FAX
MAIL: David Troy, 570F Ritchie Highway, Severna Park, MD 21146
GENIE: Toad-Serv.
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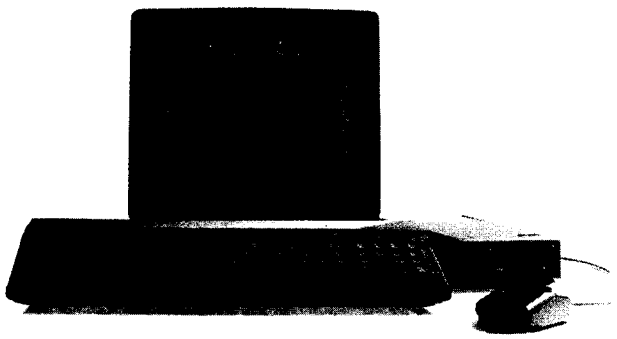

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Atari in London, Update

More Or Less Than Last Year?

by Milt Creighton

The Annual Physical Checkup. Once again I was afforded the opportunity to travel to the United Kingdom on business and once again I made my regular pilgrimage to the Mecca of London's computer shopping district, Tottenham Court Road. For the past few years I have combed the stores, looking at the hardware and software on display, to try to gauge the state of Atari's health in London, if not in the UK as a whole. Over the years, I have seen the early proliferation of Atari hardware and software shrink year by year nearly to obscurity.

One of our UK readers took issue with my observations last year, claiming that Atari was selling like hotcakes (or perhaps crumpets) by mail order. So this year I looked for signs that I might have somehow missed last year. Volume mail order sales could be a viable market, I suppose, especially if there are a number of Atari magazines on the newsstands to tout the hardware.

An Exhaustive Search. During my investigations, I visited every computer/stereo/electronics store along Tottenham Court Road, the Virgin Games megastore, and Selfridges (a huge department store with a computer department), and combed the magazine racks in three bookstores. I found Atari hardware as scarce as it was last year. Only one store carried Atari hardware and had it on display and that was Silica House. On the other hand, where Silica House had only one Atari on display last year, they had nearly an entire room devoted to Atari this year with both the TT and Mega STe on display. I did not see any Falcons though. In addition, Silica House also runs the Selfridges Computer Department. They also had one Atari STe on display, but the computer department as a whole has shrunk by 50% from last year. I also found one more 520STe in one of the other electronic stores, but it was in bad shape and buried under cords and debris in a corner of a display case so I won't count it.

A Ratio of Three to One. I found Atari software in both Silica House and the Virgin Games store. Since the Virgin Games store sells software for numerous platforms it is one gauge of the relative amount of software that is being sold (at least in the London area) by platform. This year there were four tall racks of Atari software compared to about 12 racks of Amiga software and even more IBM-compatible software. MacIntosh software appeared about as plentiful as Atari software. The titles were current as far as I could tell since Virgin turns their stock over quickly.

A Ratio of Six to One. The magazine rack displays bore out roughly the same proportion as I found in the Virgin Games store. There were exactly two Atari magazines on display. I counted more than a dozen Amiga magazines, mostly game related. There were close to a dozen IBM-compatible magazines and most of these were of a more technical nature, UK editions of US magazines like *PC Computing, Computer Shopper,* and the ilk. There were also a couple of Apple-related magazines.

But Better Than Last Year. In summary, Atari has a slightly more visible presence in London that a year ago, but still appears to be playing third or fourth fiddle to IBM-compatible and the Commodore Amiga. While the IBM-compatible has captured the business market (to no one's surprise) the Amiga appears to retain a strong presence in the games market. Amiga is being challenged by the advent of the new Nintendo and Sega dedicated game machines, however. Sega and Nintendo are sold all over London now and even the major software houses are stocking increasing numbers of titles for these machines. If Atari is selling large amounts of systems through mail order, I didn't see any more evidence of it. I was unable to find any Atari advertising not related to the Lynx or Portfolio outside the two Atari magazines on the racks. From what I saw, Atari is hanging on at about the same level as last year with perhaps marginal improvement, but still well behind IBM-compatibles and the Amiga.

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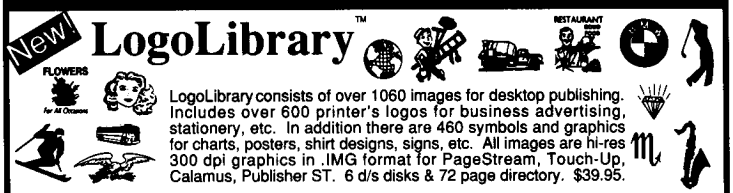

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Databases and FidoNet Nodes

Nov. Edition and the New Additions

As I write this edition of my monthly column, I can't help but think about the two new additions to my family. As announced last month, I am now the proud father of twin girls. I'm actually finishing this up in California this month. I flew out to Los Angeles to visit our new twins for a whole week! I had forgotten all about sleep deprivation, since our next youngest is five years old.

I may now have four children, but my 8-bit, 6502-based computer now has a grandchild of sorts, the new Atari Falcon. It isn't totally clear what the introduction of the Falcon will mean to grandpa 8-bit. I hope it doesn't force him into the old age home. (You and I can make sure that doesn't happen.) While grandpa's heart rate may be a little slower (1MHz vs 30MHz) and he may not have as many bells and whistles, he still remains a productive member of computer society. Just because he's old, doesn't mean he's useless or should be put out to pasture.

Elsewhere in This Issue

Regular CN contributor, Charles Cole provides us with two articles this month. First is a review of Computer Software Services 3 1/2" disk drive upgrade. Second is a close look at Todd Bake's excellent public domain database program, *Diskbase*. Chris McCoy appears for the first time in *Current Notes* with a re-examination of LJK's *Data Perfect* database program.

My backlog of articles is gone now. There are several articles in work and hopefully, some of these articles will be turned in soon, so we will have some 8-bit material for the next issue. Please contact me if you are interested in contributing articles to *Current Notes*. Without your contributions, we won't have the kind of coverage you've come to expect.

FidoNet

Several new nodes have been added to the Fidonet 8-bit echo (see the accompanying table). Maybe one of these nodes is in your area. That brings the total to 43 local BBS's that carry our echo. I encourage you to join in on the fun. If you are looking for Fidonet BBSs in your area, I can get that information to you. Ask me by regular mail, GEnie, CompuServe or the Internet. Be sure to include your area code. If your local SysOp does not carry the 8-bit echo, ask about it. Some SysOps won't do it. Some will. Mine cooperated. (More on this later.)

Paul Ahlhart now regularly contributes to the FidoNet 8-bit echo. Paul writes the A-T-A-R-I column for *Atari Interface Magazine*. (A-T-A-R-I = Answers, Tips And Relevant Information.) Wes Newell has also joined us on the echo as well. Wes is the inventor of those famous memory upgrades for your 8-bit.

Lately, the discussion on the echo has been dominated by dialog surrounding the merits of the *Carina Bulletin Board System* (BBS) versus *BBS Express PRO*. It's fascinating to watch. It's clear that each camp is thoroughly satisfied with their respective BBSs. I logged onto a *BBS Express PRO* board and was impressed. This particular BBS was Amos Jackson's who hails from Minnesota. He's another regular on the echo. It has been a long time since I've been on a BBS run by an 8-bit machine. Now I need to find a *Carina BBS* and make the comparison myself. Craig Rothman has volunteered to write an article for us about *BBS Express Professional* and we are looking forward to that. All in all, there is a good exchange of 8-bit information on the echo and I encourage you to get on board.

New FidoNet Nodes

Zone:Net/Node	BBS Name, City, ST; SysOp; Phone No. (Comments)
1:2600/175.0	Renegade's Cove, Smryna DE; Dave Osburn; 302–653–1467 (2400 baud)
1:290/3.0	The Maligned ST, Urbandale IA; Mike O'Malley; 515–253–9530 (9600b)
1:3817/3	Data Exchange BBS, Leesville LA; Don Morris; 318–239–2122 (9600 baud)
1:243/37	Spectral Visions, Ottawa Ont. Canada; Scott Fowler; 613–798–0366 (2400b)
1:247/101	Doctor on Board, St. Catharines Ont. Canada; Hugh Mitchell; 416–937–1907 (9600b)
1:124/3119	Battlemech BBS, Lewisville TX; Ray Gillman; 214–315–0753 (9600b)
1:124/6403	The Wylie Connection, Wylie TX; Wes Newell; 214–442– 6612 (9600b)
1:109/345	Hallucination, Fairfax VA; Michael Malak; 1–703–425–6638 (9600b)
1:138/162.0	Callahan's Place, Ashfork WA; Brian Lane; 206–569–2911 (9600b)

Atari Explorer Drops 8-bit Coverage

Mike Lindsay of *Atari Explorer* informs me that *Atari Explorer* is no longer providing information for 8-bit users. The magazine was recently trimmed down to 68 pages before it was brought in-house and will need to center its focus on products that Atari is presently marketing.

This is disappointing, but expected, news from Atari Corp. Take heart, however, I am trying to locate *Explorer's* former 8-bit writer/editor, Elwood J.C. Kureth to see whether he would be willing to enter the ranks of *CN.*

What's New on GEnie?

Activity in the GEnie libraries has been phenomenal again this past month. There were 47 uploads in September. The most prolific uploader award for this month goes to Thomas J. Starace who uploaded 16 files, some of which were his own programming efforts. Here are a few of his more interesting files:

TXT.DCM (File #6022) prints IBM and ST text files;

THEPLOT.DCM (File #6021) contains printer utilities for your 1020 plotter;

VIDLOVE.DCM (File #6020) is a video greeting card demo;

FAT.DCM and **FAT.DOC** (Files #6017 and #6018) is a program that helps you keep track you food fat intake;

WICKET.DOC and **WICKET.DCM** (Files #6014 and #6015) is a new version of *Tetris* programmed by Thomas with new features, like exploding blocks and blocks that change shape as they fall; and

IO.DCM and **IO.DOC** (Files #6012 and #6013) also look to be good. The IO.DCM file is 120K.

ANIMATSURI continues to upload great graphics and pictures for everyone.

DIRW.ARC (File #6025) contains a "wide" directory utility for the SpartaDOS X Cartridge.

PABOWK.ARC (File #6007) is an 8-bit QWK-mail offline text reader.

RUNDMC has uploaded number of game demos from SSS. They include **HORROR1.DCM** and **HORROR2.DCM** (Files #6002 and #6003) and **ROSEDEMO.ARC** (File #6001)

There were a couple of new digitized music demos uploaded this past month. They are **RAINDEMO.ARC** (File #5982) as well as **JOURNEY1.DCM** and **JOURNEY2.DCM** (Files #5994 and #5995).

J.MCGOWAN15 uploaded **CAICS.ARC** (File #5987), a computer aided instruction (CAI) program as well as some new TextPro Macros, **GEMAC.ARC** (File# 5997).

I haven't had a chance to examine all these files personally yet, since there are so many of them. The 8-bit bulletin board section on GEnie remains the same as last month. A general dearth of activity. Hopefully, the SysOps will fix this soon.

What's New on CompuServe?

In addition to all the Info-Atari8 Digests from the Internet, there was a little more activity in the Compuserve (CIS) libraries in September, though not as much as in GEnie.

I read in one of the Info-Atari8 Digests that Z-Mag 210(!) is available in the Internet Atari Archive. The last Z-Mag posted on CIS or GEnie was 206 or 207 and that was a long time ago. Hopefully, someone will take my cue and cross-post the "missing" Z-Mags to GEnie and/or CIS!

Here are a few of the more interesting September uploads to CIS:

KRONIK.ARC (Lib 5) from James M. Pittman is an original design typeface for Daisy-Dot III. The write-up claims that if you reduce your print output on a copy machine at 64%, you will get a printed piece that truly resembles a laser printer output.

MACKOL.ARC (Lib 14) allows you to customize your screen colors (and keyboard speed with XL/XE) while working with the MAC/65 cartridge! Includes Source Code file, ready for LOADing into MAC/65 for customizing and final assembly.

ACUGAK.TXT and **ACUGLZ.TXT** (Lib 1) contain the Atari Classics magazine Atari User Group listing.

ACBBS.TXT (Lib 9) contains the Atari Classics Atari Bulletin Board System listing.

JOYDOS.ARC (Lib 3) is a joystick-driven menu utility for MYDOS and should be loaded from TURBO BASIC for best results.

DIGIVT.ARC (Lib 6) is an Atari BASIC program that makes a stand alone .COM file from a .DIG sampled sound file. [Editor's Editorial Note: The description for this file contained the following citation, "This file is (C) 1992 by The Hackers Club, but may be freely uploaded and distributed to all BBS's EXCEPT GEnie, or any other GE owned service." That is a pretty interesting comment. There was also a little slam against non-Sparta DOSes. Some people are getting to be a little much.--RR]

SUPORT.TXT (Lib 1) is a list of Atari 8-bit vendors, developers and magazines. (*Current Notes* *is* listed.) It is not as comprehensive as Ray Wilmott's listing, but has a few additional listings I will be checking out.

The message base area on CIS is going gangbusters as usual. Everyone is watching the current educational dialog between Charlie Koontz and Bob Woolley. Bob is building Charlie the most customized, far out, 1200XL known to the planet. (Several Operating Systems on board, expanded memory, a Parallel Bus Interface (PBI)!, etc.) Bob Puff is helping with some of the Black Box specs with which the PBI will need to interface. All this, because Charlie really likes the 1200XL keyboard. BTW, Charlie Koontz is working on a review of Computer Software Service's Floppy Board for us.

CIS also sponsored a real-time update to the WAACE activities on Saturday and Sunday night (10 and 11 Oct). I was on the other coast during WAACE and hopefully I can find someone to write a short paragraph on what happened in the 8-bit world at WAACE. Any volunteers?

Atari Classics (AC) 8-Bit Magazine Update

The Premier Issue of *Atari Classics* (AC) was completed in time for free distribution at the WAACE AtariFest. The first issue was 32 pages cover-to-cover.

I was pleasantly surprised that managing editor, Ben Poehland actually pulled off what I considered nearly an impossible task. (As you may remember, Ben used to be the 8-bit editor here in *Current Notes*.) Between August 5 and the copy deadline of Sept. 19 (six weeks), Ben managed to locate and "hire" a staff of 15-20 people, get them to write copy, solicit ads, and put together a professionally printed magazine.

You can still get on the mailing list for a FREE complimentary copy of the Premier Issue by sending your postal mailing address to: Atari Classics, 179 Sproul Rd./Rt. 352, Frazer, PA 19355 USA.

If, after the premier issue of the magazine, you decide to subscribe, there is a subscription form in the back. Fill it out, and send it in with your payment. (*AC* started to officially accept subscriptions the week of Oct. 12.) A one year subscription consisting of six issues is $25. Six "Disks of the Month" are an additional $9. *AC* accepts check, money orders, VISA and MasterCard. Remember, in order for there to be a second issue, Ben needs at least 500 subscribers.

For issue #2 (Jan/Feb 93), Ben plans to blitz every known 8-bit developer/vendor and offer low commercial ad rates. The ad solicitation campaign is already in progress. If vendor support for the magazine continues strong and there is a strong response to the subscription drive, Ben is hoping Unicorn Publications will let the AC increase to 40 pages for issue #2.

TextPRO+ Version 5 Beta Version Here!

Ronnie Riche has finally finished the Beta Test Version of *TP5*! Disks are forthcoming to registered users. The program is also available on GEnie (File #6026) and CompuServe (Library 5, **TPX50X.ARC**). Report any anomalies or bugs to Ronnie. The Beta Test will go on for 2-3 months. Around Christmas, Ronnie will sort through the comments and go final with the code. A revised manual will also be created at that time. Send comments to: Ronnie Riche, 1700 Ayock St., Arabi, LA 70032. GEnie: R.RICHE.

A Visit to My Local SysOp

CAUTION: The following paragraphs contain "MS-DOSish" words that may be offensive or repulsive to certain faint-hearted 8-bit aficionados. Read ahead at your own risk.

My local BBS, StarScan (sm) from whence I get my FidoNet feed is super and has a fantastic SysOp, Tom Jones. Tom is the FidoNet Hub for the Montgomery, AL area and the hub for at least one other computer network as well. Tom set me up on FidoNet at no charge, even though I think I am currently the only 8-bitter in Montgomery.

A few nights ago, I decided to drop the latest issue of *Current Notes* at his home in his mailbox to let him know what I had been up to. As I walked toward his front door, the lights went on. I was discovered! Oh well, I knocked and he came to the door. It turned out that Tom's lights have detectors that cause the lights to come on when you approach. Fooled again.

Tom invited me inside and was nice enough to show me his BBS. Tom runs his BBS on a 30MHz 486. He has CD-ROM on-line as well as a monster hard drive. For modems, he had two US Robotics 9600 baud jobs. What was really neat was that he was able to tour me through the system, while guys were calling in!!! Yes, Tom has true multitasking through *Desqview*. I was pretty impressed.

Tom was able to give me a nuts and bolts view of how FidoNet really worked. Let me tell you, there is a whole counterculture involved with these SysOps who run these networks. It is totally private. These guys are true experts. There are a myriad of informal protocols and agreements that make it happen. And it is all done for free! The programs that make it work are quite involved. For some FidoNet echos, the SysOp sends them one or more places. For other echos, they are sent other places. All this is done by agreement between the various SysOps across the country.

Tom has been a great help to me with FidoNet by explaining things and looking up the node information that I publish here in *CN*. Tom doesn't even own an Atari. It's comforting to know that there is a great brotherhood of computer owners throughout the country, and we Atari 8-bitters are a part of it.

Proposed FCC Access Charges

GEnie and CompuServe Users have been following the current Federal Communications Commission (FCC) access charge issue with great interest. Essentially, the FCC wants to charge on-line services new fees to provide new features based on the new telecommunications technology becoming available. This would raise the current common carrier access charges for these new features by three to five times and guess who would end up paying the new added costs. Originally, the FCC was unwilling to reconsider its position on this matter, but thanks to an uproar from the masses and the industry, the FCC is now willing to listen to other arguments.

Being a market-based kind of guy, I am entirely opposed to this concept. My arguments against the FCC rule proposal are slightly different than the ones

presented by CompuServe and GEnie. These new rules are essentially non-legislated, executive branch imposed "modem taxes." I say, "No modem taxation without on-line representation." Taxing new technology is counterproductive and hurts our international competitiveness, by stifling creativity through the threat of non-profitability. If we as a country continue to tax every new idea, pretty soon, no one will be interested in coming up with new ideas. Of course, the "taxes/fees" would not be used to fund the creation of new ideas, but to pay for increased regulation. The next thing you know, Uncle Sam will be wanting to regulate things like your local SysOp or FidoNet, which are doing just fine, without any help from the government.

Write your local Congressman and the FCC! Get further information to do this from GEnie or CompuServe (or me). A similar tactic by the FCC was turned around in 1987, thanks to concerned citizens. America is currently the world leader in telecommunications and computer networking by a slim margin. Let's not muck this up by inhibiting our world competitiveness.

That's it for this month. Write, call or E-mail your requests, questions or complaints to: Rick Reaser, 2427 D Meadow Ridge Ln, Montgomery, AL 36117-4616. GEnie: R.REASERJR1; CompuServe: 72130,207.

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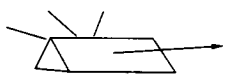

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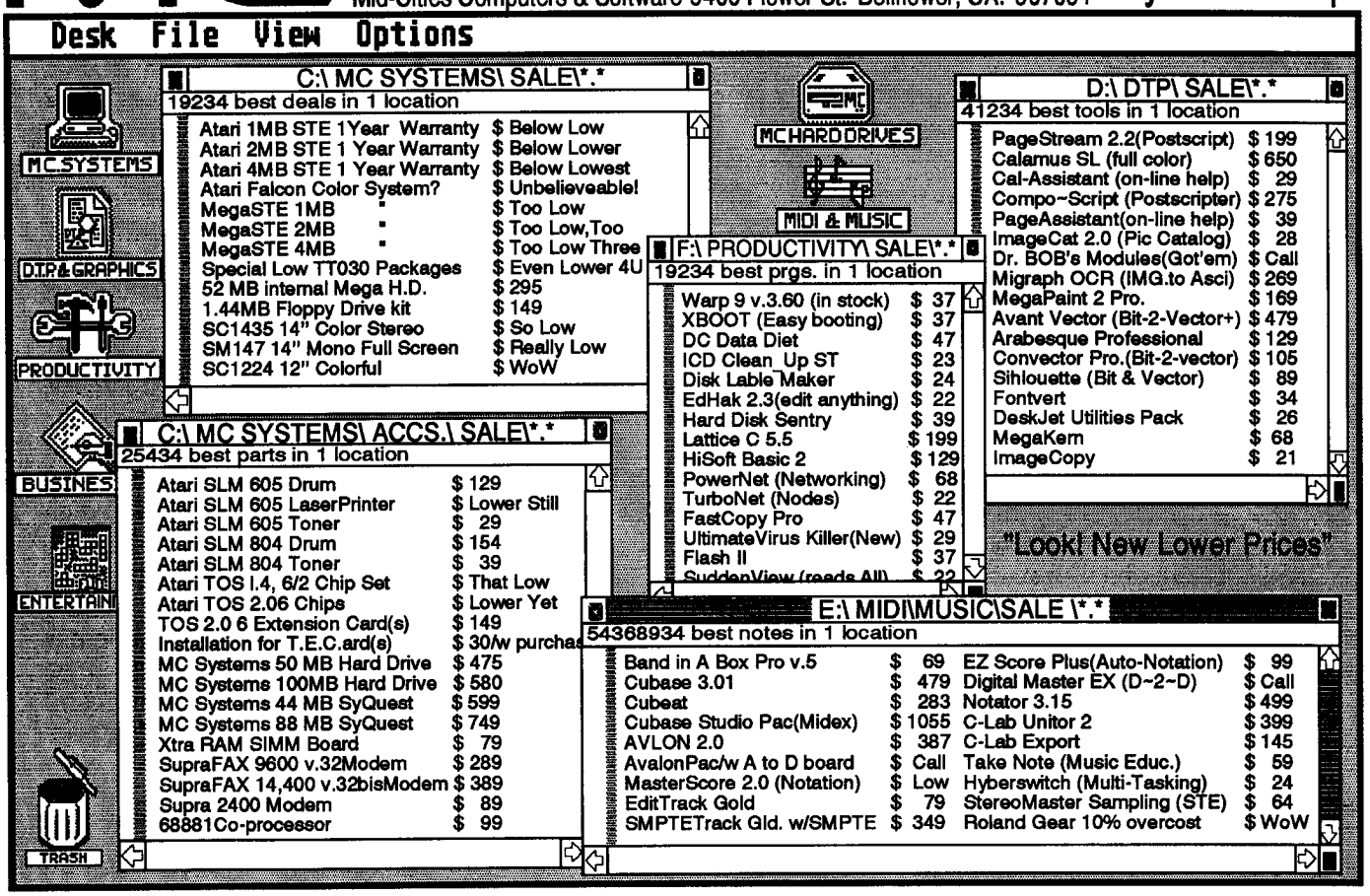

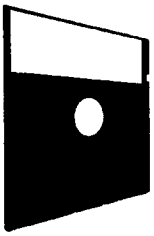

A 3-1/2 inch Disk Drive for Atari 8-bit Computers

by Charles A. Cole

For owners of an Atari XF551 disk drive, Computer Software Services (CSS), offers the perfect upgrade. A 3-1/2 inch disk drive can be substituted for the 5-1/4 inch mechanism that comes in the XF551, or it can be added as a slave drive running off of the XF551's circuit board.

So, what do you get in the kits, and how difficult is the installation? I purchased the slave version for my own use, and a friend of mine purchased the internal swap out version, and I installed it for him.

Hardware

The drive mechanism provided with my kit was definitely first rate. It was a Sony model MFD-11W-41D drive, which is a top-of-the-line double-sided (DS), double-density (DD) mechanism capable of up to 750K per disk. The faceplate matches the color of the Atari XF551 exactly. The drive came in a 5-1/4 inch mounting frame so it was a perfect match to the XF551 mechanism's mounting screws. Even when used in the external slave mode, the Sony drive is a sealed unit, so dirt and dust will not be a problem even if you don't have a spare cabinet to put it into. I did add stick-on rubber feet to the bottom of the Sony drive's frame so I could set it on top of my XF551 and not scratch the XF551 cabinet. Note that the kits are available without the 3-1/2 drive as well.

Documentation

Because I was one of the first purchasers of the external version, CSS had not finalized their documentation. I received two pages of photocopied, handwritten installation instructions. Even these brief notes were sufficient, however, for a successful installation on the first try.

Installation

You have some latitude of placement for the external version, too, since it comes with a 34-pin ribbon cable that is approximately 18 inches long. CSS even offered to customize the drive with a longer cable at no additional charge. To install this version, you must open your XF551 case and solder 7 wires to 2 of the XF551's circuit board chips. CSS even offers tips on an easy way to do this by first melting a small blob of solder onto each chip pin that will be used, and then going around and attaching the wires to these pins with a little additional heat. This method prevents overheating of the chip pins, which can easily destroy a microchip.

The Sony drive's power is taken from the XF551 supply via a "Y" splitter, which is provided in the kit. An adapter plug connects the Sony drive's 34-pin ribbon cable to the XF551's circuit board. An EPROM supplied by CSS replaces the original Atari ROM chip on the XF551's board, and allows you to switch between the two drives from within DOS.

If these are the only drives you have online, the XF551 will be drive #1, and the Sony will be drive #2. They can both be configured to other numbers when used in conjunction with a Multi I/O box or Black Box. Since I am also running hard drives with my system, I have them configured as drives #5 and #6. Installation takes only about 30 minutes.

The internal "swap out" version is a little more complicated, since you must remove the XF551 drive mechanism and replace it with the Sony drive. You also lose the use of the XF551 as a 5-1/4 inch drive. The same 7 wires must be soldered in on the internal version, and a different EPROM replaces the Atari controller chip.

Features and Advantages

The biggest gain is in disk capacity. Whereas a stock XF551, formatted DS, DD with SpartaDOS or MyDOS gives you over 1,400 sectors, the Sony 3-1/2 inch drive formats out to 2,867 sectors with MyDOS (2,822 free sectors) or 2,872 with the SpartaDOS-X cartridge. Why the difference? Doesn't an 80-track drive format the same regardless of the DOS used? Sure it does-but SpartaDOS-X does not put a DOS on the disk, since it is all in the cartridge. SpartaDOS 3.2D will give you less free sectors than the cartridge, but more than MyDOS.

What else does the EPROM supplied by CSS offer besides the ability to switch drive assignments from DOS? How about Ultra Speed reading and writing? In the dual drive version, both the XF551 and the Sony drive will run at Ultra Speed if you have CSS's Ultra Speed Plus XL/XE operating system installed in your computer. This increases read/write time by approximately 7-fold. [Editor's Note: See CN Sep 91, "The Ultra Speed Plus OS." —RR]

What you get is the ability to store twice as much on each floppy disk as you can with an XF551; nearly quadruple the capacity of a 1050 drive; or eight times more files per disk than with an 810 drive.

Problems, Shortcomings and Workarounds

Problems? Yes, I ran into two, but they were both easily solved. The first concerned the XF551 power supply. A stock XF551 power supply delivers both 5 and 12 volt outputs for the XF551 mechanism and circuit board, but not at sufficient amperage to drive the Sony mechanism for long periods without becoming quite hot. A small muffin fan may be the cheapest cure for this overheating problem, but I went one step further. Since an IBM power supply delivers 5 and 12 volts in sufficient amperage, I run both drives, as well as my 130XE, Multi I/O box, and SX212 modem off of an IBM switching power supply, and have plenty of power to spare if I add something in the future. This also eliminates all internal heat buildup in the XF551 drive, because you are bypassing its voltage regulator chip.

With the increased disk capacity, a shortcoming in MyDOS and SpartaDOS 3.2D became apparent. MyDOS limits each disk to no more than 64 files before its directory is filled. SpartaDOS 3.2D can hold 128 files before the directory is filled. The use of subdirectories may, therefore, become necessary if you intend to store many small files on a disk.

I use the SpartaDOS-X cartridge, which has a file limit of 1,423 entries, so that posed no problems. After I filled my first 3-1/2 inch disk, however, another problem did become obvious. Have you ever had to wait for a directory containing nearly 1,000 entries to be read and displayed? After that experience, I went back and created several subdirectories to stash the files in. Using lots of subdirectories makes file access much quicker.

Before I received my 3-1/2 inch drive, I began wondering if changing to a high-capacity 1.44 megabyte drive would be feasible. After all, SpartaDOS supports that capacity. I think even MyDOS does, too. So, I phoned CSS and posed this question to CSS. Good idea, but it won't work. The entire XF551 circuit board would have to be ripped out and replaced with an MS-DOS controller board, which wouldn't even fit into the XF551 cabinet. Sigh. Don't give up, though--the people at CSS are probably working on that problem right now.

[For further information contact: Computer Software Services, P.O.Box 17660, Rochester, NY 14617. Orders: (716) 429-5639; FAX: 716) 247-7158; BBS: (716) 247-7157. Add Slave 3-1/2, $139.95; Add Slave 3-1/2 (w/o drive), $79.95; Swap 3-1/2 for 5-1/4, $99.95; Swap 3-1/2 for 5-1/4 (w/o drive), 59.95. Shipping and handling $8.00.]

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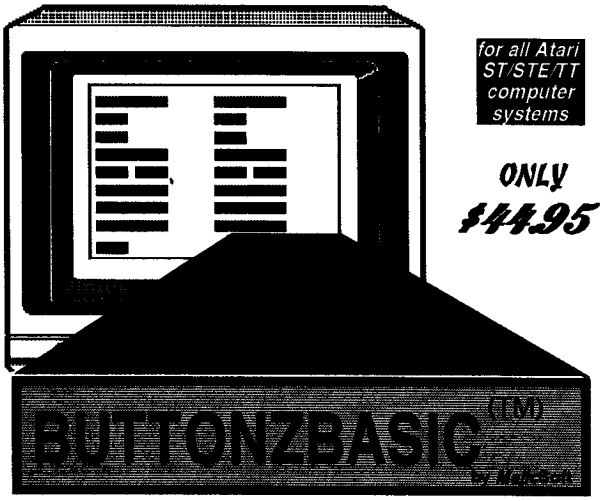

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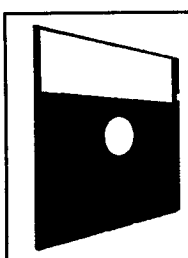

Data Perfect Revisited

Still an Impressive Program

by Chris McCoy

In the early 80's *Data Perfect* was probably considered a professional database. By today's standards of the 16-bit and 32-bit machines, it may not be professional, but it is still an impressive program for the 8-bit user.

Hardware. When you configure Data Perfect for your hardware system you can choose between a one or two-drive system. You can also choose between single and double-density drives.

I have two double-sided double-density XF551 drives. I was disappointed to learn that *Data Perfect* doesn't take advantage of side two. When configured for single density, you have 720 sectors of information storage available at 128 bytes per sector. For double density you have 720 sectors at 256 bytes per sector.

The configuration menu also asks if you are using a 40-column screen, or if you are using an 80-column board such as Bit 3 or Austin Franklin. Bit 3 and Austin Franklin are no longer available. LJK indicates that Atari's XEP 80-column card is not compatible with *Data Perfect*. This is not a major drawback. *Data Perfect* is quite workable in 40 columns.

Database Design. There are two screens that you custom design. One is the data entry screen. When you design a database, you decide where to place the information on the screen. I like having the screen look the way I want it to. The second screen you design has to do with a printed, or hard copy, report. This one is laid out the way you want it to look on paper. Because *Data Perfect* is capable of printing a report up to 127 columns wide, it allows you to see all of the columns by scrolling across the screen.

Data Perfect allows you a maximum of 32 fields per record. The number of fields you use, along with the length of each field, determines how many records your database will hold. The program will report this number to you after you have configured the structure of the file. *Data Perfect* simply determines how many records will fit on one disk and formats it accordingly.

I've found that a database that has many fields of information can contain several hundred records. And one that uses only a few fields might contain two or three thousand records. (Remember, I use double density.)

Data Perfect allows you to specify four special types of fields: Alphanumeric, which can be a combination of letters and numbers such as in an address; a date field; a numeric field, which can be treated arithmetically such as amounts of money, or the number of items in an inventory; and, finally, a formula field, which allows you to perform calculations on numeric fields. You could keep track of your home finances or the budget of a small business with *Data Perfect*.

Features. *Data Perfect* has powerful sort features. You can sort on up to four fields with two criteria for each field, plus choosing which record numbers to sort. This is a total of nine different sort criteria. I'm impressed!

You can generate hard copy reports, complete with a header. You can print mailing labels with up to 10 lines of information per label. If you have *Letter Perfect*, the word processing companion to *Data Perfect*, you can do form letters. The manual says that you can also use some other word processors. This is not so. If form letters are important, you will have to locate a copy of LJK's sister program, *Letter Perfect*.

There are no LJK utilities available to let you easily convert *Data Perfect* files into something an MS-DOS machine can read. It can be done. See "The Impossible Just Takes a Little Longer," by Jake Olbrich, *Atari Interface* magazine, June/July 90.

In the report generator, you can enter printer codes to make use of your printer's capabilities. One place asks you to enter the code for "Bold on." They are not asking for an emphasized, or double strike code, but one for double width. It is nice to have the report title in double width type, but I had a problem here. If I told the header to be double width, the entire report was printed double width. My Panasonic printer was not receiving the code for "Bold off." After much searching and experimentation, I discovered another code in my printer manual that turns double width on for a single line only. This code works and my report looks great.

Quirks. Also be aware that in different parts of the program a letter on the command line may mean different things. Example: An "R" in one place might be a command that stands for "Repeat character." In another place it might mean to "Return" to edit mode. This shows the value of a quick reference card.

Another command on the command line is "Quit." It took me some getting used to this. I am used to hitting the return key to initiate a command. In *Data Perfect* the return key enters data or other information to be acted upon, such as sort criteria. But this information will not be acted on until you press the Quit, or "Q" key.

Summary. *Data Perfect* is a great program, but it takes time to learn. Plan on spending a couple of hours studying the manual, and another one or two hours doing the program tutorial before you design your own database. [*Data Perfect* is no longer marketed by LJK and not available from any commercial vendors, to my knowledge. American Techna-Vision used to sell the program, but stopped due to lack of good quality manuals from the supplier. The only way to obtain this powerful database now is second hand. I still use it for two huge databases. Be sure you get the latest version, 2.04 if you see it at a swapmeet or for sale on a BBS. By the way, a major shortcoming of the program is that it won't print through the MIO's printer port.—RR]

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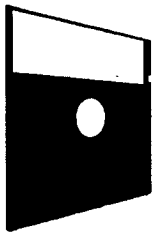


Diskbase 1.0

Powerful Public Domain Database

Review by Charles A. Cole

Throughout the life of the Atari 8-bit computer line, many individuals and companies have released database programs. I must have close to 50 different ones that have been written over the years, and I know there must be hundreds more that I don't have. Most of these programs are dedicated to one specific task, such as maintaining a disk library, name and address file, telephone directory, or some such purpose; or they have a very limited storage capacity of less than 500 records. In the realm of free-form databases, which allow the user to customize the data structure to their own needs, three stand out as the most useful: *Synfile+* from Synapse Software, released in 1983; *Data Perfect* from LJK Enterprises, released in 1984; and *Diskbase 1.0* by Todd Bake of St. Clair Shores, MI, released in 1988.

What's that? You never heard of *Diskbase*? Probably because it is public domain, and was never sold in stores! *Synfile+* and *Data Perfect* are still available from a few twilight sources, were rather expensive when first released, and are getting harder and harder to find. *Diskbase* is Public Domain.

Prior Database Experiences

In my particular case, I began with *Data Perfect* which, even today, is one of the most powerful database programs ever written for the Atari 8-bit line. It is so comprehensive, in fact, that just working your way through the instruction manual is a major project in itself! *Data Perfect* was way ahead of its time, offering color screens, 80-column displays, and support of double density drives when most of us were still plugging along with Atari 400s or 800s and model 810 single-density disk drives. As my disk library grew and I needed greater and greater storage capacity, I switched to *Synfile+* after acquiring an Atari 130XE and XF551 drive, because it used all of the 130XE's RAM for file index storage, and a single file could be split across up to 16 disks.

Both of these programs suffer from the same problem, though--they won't write to a double-sided drive! Then, along came *Diskbase*, a public domain release from Todd Bake written in the Action! language for speed, but not requiring the cartridge to run. *Diskbase's* greatest asset, for my particular use, is the ability to run it from a hard drive with the SpartaDOS X cartridge, because it is not on a copy protected disk as are *Data Perfect* and *Synfile+*; and the ability to store your data files on a hard drive or a double-sided, double-density disk! Another strong point that *Diskbase* has going for it is the ability to use a word processor to key in your data, and then let the *Diskbase* program read your word processor file into its database structure.

Memory Requirements

Despite its name, *Diskbase* is not another one of those "Disk Index Only" databases, but is a true free-form database that can be used for a wide variety of purposes, similar to the MS-DOS world's *dBase* programs. According to the documentation provided by Mr. Bake, *Diskbase* is designed to run on any Atari 8-bit computer with at least 48K memory, and with any DOS with a MEMLO of $1D00 or less. Atari DOS 2.0 and 2.5, DOS XL, and SpartaDOS are specifically recommended. I haven't tried it with MyDOS 4.50, and it may not be compatible with it. MyDOS's documentation indicates a MEMLO of $1F00, which may not be sufficient for *Diskbase*.

Capacity

What really sets *Diskbase* apart from any other database is its storage capacity--up to 65,536 records! *Diskbase* gains its large storage capacity by virtue of the fact that only the index and file pointer bytes are loaded into memory to perform data sorts. For those who may need a better database than what they are now using, let's run through *Diskbase's* main features item by item.

Functions

All of *Diskbase's* functions are selected from a main menu consisting of nine items, plus two that do not show on the menu. Unlisted items are the [!] key to toggle write verify on and off, and the [?] key to see how much free memory is left. Free memory only determines how many records can be sorted, however, and has nothing to do with actual storage capacity.

DOS FUNCTIONS from the main menu allows the usual disk management procedures such as formatting, etc. Two that are different with *Diskbase*, however, are Copy Records and Write Structure.

Diskbase uses absolute sector/byte pointers, which means that you should not use your DOS's copy function to duplicate a data disk because that will hopelessly scramble your file. The *Diskbase* Copy Records

module will copy them without scrambling, but you do need two drives or a ramdisk because disk switching isn't supported. The good news is that users of SpartaDOS can copy data files with the DOS's Copy function with no problems, since it retains absolute sector/byte locations.

The Write Structure choice of *Diskbase* allows you to copy a database's field names, lengths, etc. to a new disk without copying the actual data, and is used to begin a new file with the same structure as an old one. This is particularly handy when you suddenly run out of disk space and need to extend a data file onto another disk.

OPEN FILE is used to create a new file or to open an existing file for changes or additions. You will be prompted for a file name and, if it is not found, *Diskbase* assumes that you want to create it and switches to the New File option. *Diskbase* will ask for the number of fields (data elements) you want to create, and the field name length. The next screen is where you design your new file's data entry outline. If your data file is to have more fields than can fit on one screen, the screen will scroll vertically to allow additional entries. If a particular field is defined as being longer than 40 characters, the screen willscroll horizontally to allow the entry of data. You do need to plan ahead for hard copy printouts, however, and not use more than 80 columns of data per individual record if you think you will want to print horizontal hard copy.

Using Diskbase

My primary usage of *Diskbase* is to maintain my disk file index. I created a file structure that allows 4 characters for a disk number, 14 characters for the program title, 26 for a file description, 7 for source ID, 6 for its date of release or acquisition, and 3 for the type of DOS used. With an 80-column printer, that still leaves 20 spaces to divide between the columns during printout. *Synfile+* and *Data Perfect* allow flexible formatting of printouts, but *Diskbase* automatically justifies the printout against the left and right margins, puts a four-digit file number counter in the left column, and then divides the remaining spaces evenly to separate the columns. Once you have your data entry screen designed and hit Escape, your file structure will be written to disk and you will be returned to the main menu.

ALTER FIELDS allows you to change the name of previously created data fields within an existing file, but you cannot change their length.

CHANGE RECORDS is where you go to add records to a data file or to make changes to an entry. When you enter this selection, the first file in the database will be displayed along with the current record number and total number of records. A one-line menu across the bottom of the screen allows you to jump to a particular record number, to the end of the file, to the next or previous record, back to the first record, or to search for a particular string of characters in any of the fields. To add entries, you must first go to the end of the file. Previously entered data can be changed as desired throughout the entire file, and a search option is available to help you locate data that needs to be changed. Records can also be deleted from the file while in this mode. Deleted records cannot be undeleted, so the program asks you if you are really sure before it deletes the record, and gives you an opportunity to change your mind.

READ RECORDS is one of *Diskbase's* most useful features. Although data entry from within *Diskbase* itself is fast and easy, I prefer to use *AtariWriter Plus* or *TextPro* and then let *Diskbase* READ the text file into its own structure. This allows me to keep the original text file as a backup in case anything happens to my *Diskbase* file.

PRINT RECORDS allows you to output data to a printer, disk file, or the screen in three different formats. You can print all or just certain fields of all or just certain records. If you choose printer output, you are given the option of entering a printer control string to set up print pitch, margins, type font, etc., depending on your printer's capabilities.

I have personally encountered what seems to be a bug in this routine. I have an Epson LX-86 programmable printer which can have its page length set through software commands (Control C 55, for example) but for some reason it refuses to accept this command when it is sent from within the *Diskbase* printer control string.

I like to have my printouts with a break between pages, but *Diskbase's* default is to print the entire file without any page breaks at all. If you don't have your paper set exactly right, it will print right in the middle of the perforation. Single sheet printing is not supported.

The three formats offered for both printer and disk file output are: Regular Format, to print the records as they appear on the screen; Horizontal, to print one record per line in columns across the page; and Data Only, which is the opposite of Read Records. The Data Only option prints an ASCII text file to disk that can be updated with any word processor, and then read back into a Diskbase file. Diskbase also gives you the option of printing only certain fields or all of them, and complex conditional expressions can be entered to filter out unwanted data.

SORT allows data to be sorted on any field in either ascending (A-Z) or descending (Z-A) order. *Diskbase* uses three bytes for each record in the file, and the sort buffer is limited to around 8 K, which means that *Diskbase* can sort a file of approximately 2,600 records. Sorts do not move the data on the disk, but merely rewrite the sector and file pointers. Even so, the sorting of a large data base on a floppy drive can

require a considerable period of time. The use of a RAMdisk to perform sorts is highly advisable, provided the file to be sorted can fit within it.

I have my disk index on a hard drive, broken down into two separate files of 2,400 and 2,200 records each (A-L and M-Z), and even at hard drive read/write speeds, sorting one of these files takes over 30 minutes. On floppys, this would probably require a couple of hours, and your drive would be reading/writing during the entire sort operation! When I was maintaining my files on floppy, this caused my XF551 to overheat.

Something I found to be very helpful in the long run is the following: after you sort a file, use the Print to Disk option to write only the data to disk. It will be written in alphabetical (sorted) order. Delete your old data file, and read the data back into *Diskbase* from the copy you printed to disk. Now the file will be on your main disk in sorted order, and subsequent sorts will go much faster. Printouts will be faster, too, because the disk drive can find the files much quicker if they appear in sorted order. This also saves wear and tear on the mechanical parts of your drive's read/write head.

Leaving Diskbase

Any time you are ready to leave a file, cancel a command, or move to another operation, pressing [Escape] closes the file and returns you to the main menu. Herein lies my only real complaint about *Diskbase*, although even this is minor. There is no "EXIT" command to return to DOS from the main menu. Even if you select the DOS FUNCTIONS, exiting from the program is not possible. The only way out is to turn off your power switch and reboot. But, considering the other features that *Diskbase* offers, I can live with that!

Diskbase Advantages

For people who have massive amounts of data to store and manipulate, *Diskbase* is unsurpassed, even by the commercial products. It is the only database program I have found that will run from a hard drive and offer such a large volume of data storage and manipulation. When you consider that *Diskbase* is public domain and costs nothing but your on-line time to download it, that makes it even more attractive! I must have well over $400 invested in commercial database programs, and none of them will do as much, as quickly, and as efficiently as *Diskbase*. Since I discovered *Diskbase*, I have even stopped using those other programs that I had previously relied upon so heavily.

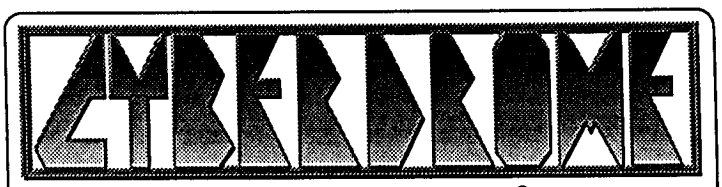
Diskbase Enhancement

Within his documentation, Mr. Bake provides technical details on the *Diskbase* file structure and invites other programmers to create add-on modules. Bob Preston of Berkley, MI, has done exactly that with a program called DBREPORT.BXE, which is also available on CompuServe and GEnie. The only restrictions on using this program are that you must have BASIC XE, SpartaDOS, and a 130XE or expanded 800XL that can use BASIC XE's Extended Mode.

DBREPORT gives you the flexibility offered by *Data Perfect* and *Synfile+* in designing custom formats for hard copy printouts, and even allows you to save these outlines to disk for future use! Another advantage is that it does allow page breaks, and you can specify how many lines of data are to appear on each page. This corrects one of the two minor complaints that I had with *Diskbase*--now, if only someone would come up with an "EXIT" module, *Diskbase* would be absolutely perfect!

Availability

Diskbase is available free for the download time on CompuServe and GEnie. Look for DSKBSE.OBJ in the Applications Library on CompuServe, and on GEnie for file #3401, DISKBASE.ALF. [Editor's Note: If you really like *Diskbase*, consider sending the author, Todd Bake, a small donation for his efforts.-RR]



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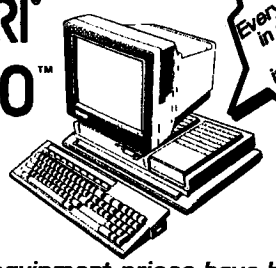

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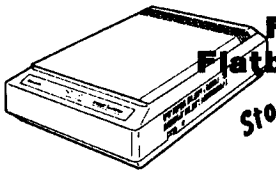

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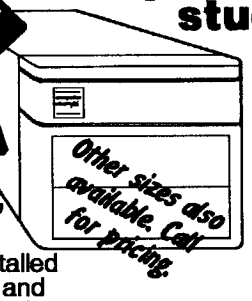

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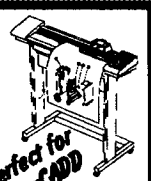

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Automated Music By John, The Composer

Review by Mike Heininger (c)1992

Just when you'd thought you'd seen it all, here comes a music program from Finland called *John the Composer* that lets you collaborate with the computer to write music even though you may not know a clef from a coda.

Compared by its creator, HMM Piip Oy, to the artificial intelligence used in chess programs, *John the Composer* creates music with as much or little guidance from its customers as they want. In fact, the program claims to be capable of learning musical tastes and composing "endlessly" in favorite styles.

Left to its own devices, *John the Composer*, as the excellent 56-page manual notes, may initially suggest music that the politest audience would call cacophony—avant garde, to say the least. If so, then the customer or user may increase participation as much as desired until the resulting music becomes acceptable.

Beneath It All: Structure

John the Composer basically operates within a structure common or close to much conventional music. To oversimplify, picture a four-section musical composition consisting of an introduction (i) of two measures (or bars), a main melody section (a) of four measures, a secondary melody section (b) of four measures, and a closing or coda (c) of two measures. Then imagine being able to play this structure in all sorts of variations, e.g., i-a-a-b-a-b-c. Aha, you say, each part can be repeated. Yes. Furthermore, you can control the amount of freewheeling *John the Composer* has in each measure, or each group of measures.

Vertical slides within such options as rhythm control John's power. "If his power is zero, he will not be inspired at all from the inspiration buttons," advises the manual. The inspiration buttons show the percentage of power you grant John; e.g., 50 percent if slid halfway up the indicator.

Choose Help You Need

Therefore, if you insist on a certain rhythm or key in a certain place, slide the inspiration marker to zero and thee shall have thy way with no input from John. On the other hand, if you want to grant John total leeway, slide the marker to 100 percent.

Confused? The program is much easier to play with than describe. And it needs to be played with to be appreciated. Tweak every option on the screen and then play the selection to hear the effect. The learning curve overall is moderate—neither the hardest nor the easiest program you ever investigated. Whether or not you're comfortable with music terms, you can understand why the manual recommends activating John in the following order: structure (which we just discussed), chord selection, chord progression and cadences, all repetitives, keys, drums, accompaniment rhythm, bass, melody, order of parts i-a-b-c, and review and improvement as necessary (and it WILL be necessary!).

Easy Changes

John the Composer is quite flexible in allowing changes of time signatures, keys, chords, rhythms, volume, repetition, instruments, and melody range, often within each part. As with most computer music programs, the biggest challenge usually is trying to minimize mechanical repetition and get more expression in terms of volume or tempo change.

Drum sounds are not heard on the ST or Mega ST unless a MIDI instrument is hooked up. Even then, you probably will have to experiment with various instrument selections to find satisfactory percussion sounds. That's because matching MIDI instrument sounds from different manufacturers has only recently begun to be standardized, i.e., making sure whatever number is the piano sound on one machine is the same on others.

As expected, sound is much better on a MIDI device than the ST. Using a Mega ST4 with Tweety Board, I turned sound off on both these when the MIDI was activated.

Works Flawlessly

John the Composer worked flawlessly with my Mega ST4, Tweety Board, hard disk, medium-resolution color and high-resolution mono monitors, AdSpeed (16mHz), and MIDI instrument—the Yamaha PSR-500 keyboard (which I recommend as the most fun, most comprehensive musical instrument for the money, about $400, anywhere).

After about an hour of experimentation, I managed a fairly decent composition that I saved in MIDI format as the manual recommended for touching up with a sequencer. I used the terrific (and expensive) *C-Lab Notator* to quickly and easily print a score of my brief effort.

But later I was not able to retrieve the composition once I had saved it with a MIDI suffix. I'm not sure whether this will be a permanent problem or not. Apparently, *John the Composer* pieces need to just plain be saved, then saved again as a MIDI file.

The worst thing about *John the Composer* is its key module protection. Your computer MUST be turned off before the module is inserted or serious damage could result. *C-Lab Notator* uses the same type of protection, an irritant not only because insertion can be delicate and awkward, but because only one such program can be run at a time.

Overall, *John the Composer* seems to be an original way to create music quickly with the help of the computer. Because much popular music consists essentially of three chords, a brief melody, and repetitive rhythm, it's reasonable to view John as a software cohort which can construct some suggested music from whatever amount of input and latitude you care to share.

Something for Everyone

Ironically, *John the Composer* can be appealing no matter what your level of musical expertise. If you know little or nothing about music, John can help you learn. If you know a lot about music, John can give you more ideas.

Listing for about $90 and not yet widely distributed in the U.S., *John the Composer* probably won't be most people's first computer music program, but it may well belong in their repertoire eventually. My favorite Atari music programs are *Music Studio* (basic), *Quartet* and *Stereo Playback* (fun quick way to create popular music with great sound), *EZ-Track Plus* and *EZ-Score Plus* (advanced but not too hard), and *C-Lab Notator* (top of the line professional).

Again, however, I must issue the caveat that while long ago I actually was a music major, since then I play strictly for occasional fun. While awed by computer and MIDI music, I am disappointed at not yet finding the magic combination of ease and power, particularly with achieving easy MIDI instrument combinations, e.g., the distinct sounds of the various instruments of a Dixieland band.

My Yamaha PSR-500, for example, is a remarkable instrument. Yet it is sheer misery using MIDI to try translating the PSR-500's individual instrument sounds into the combination I want to perpetuate on any computer software program I know of. I'd like to compose a track of clarinet, then trumpet, then trombone, then string bass, then drums, then piano, then saxophone, blending them easily into my own customized Dixieland band.

MIDI Not Easy

Sound easy? Try it. Try just getting one or two MIDI tracks in any program to sound exactly the way you want. So far I find MIDI makes composing music harder than simply using pencil and paper—just the opposite of how computers seem to make most other applications easier. If I did much composing, I'd probably struggle along the steep learning curve. But as an occasional MIDI user, the effort isn't worth it.

Ultimately, *John the Composer*—and to a similar extent *Quartet*—is something like giving a writing program an outline, a dictionary, and a grammar checker and asking it to propose a letter or story. Come to think of it, I vaguely remember tongue-in-cheek programs that compose various stories depending on user inputs to various fill-in-the-blank situations.

At any rate, rarely will the result be anything immortalizing the human participant. But if we have fun and perhaps expand our ideas from the interaction, then maybe such programs are worth it. *John the Composer* definitely is worth considering no matter what your musical talent.

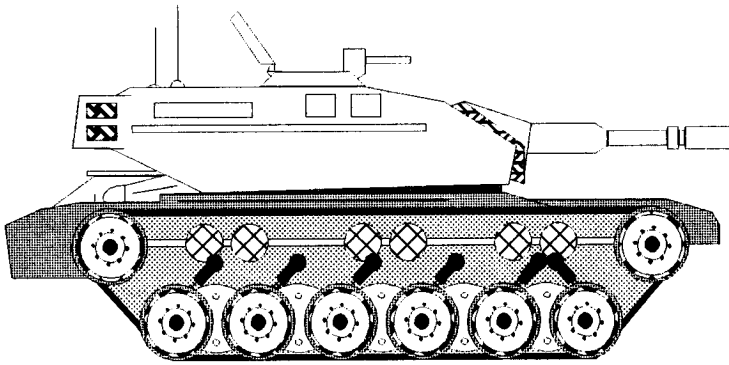
Distributors Wanted

The manual author, Tapani Rauha, writes Current Notes that "We are looking for increased international distribution and marketing for this program, and are interested in any level and form of collaboration with anybody you might know, up to and including selling of our rights.

"We are also interested in subcontract work. We have high-level skills in C programming, visual interface design, artistic interface layout for pleasing looks, professional music abilities.

"We are now working on a new program (code name Inspirator) that will revolutionize music production, and are looking for partners in this project also."

HMM Piip Oy also is looking for publishers and/or distributors. Those interested may contact them at: HMM Piip Oy (Co. Ltd.); Aninkaistenk, 3 B; 20110 Turku; FINLAND, EUROPE; FAX Int + 358 21 50 30 25.



Computer Third Reich

Great Game for Wargame Newcomers

Review by
Alfred Charles Giovetti

American companies that support the Atari ST are few, far between, and diminishing rapidly. Faithful ST users should support companies that still support their favorite platform. Avalon Hill, a Baltimore board-game publisher that, for several years, has been producing rather unremarkable computer games, such as the flight simulator *Spitfire 40*, has recently changed the thrust of the company, according to company spokesman John Huff. Avalon Hill will now produce computer game versions of their best-selling board games. *Computer Third Reich* is a conversion of the immensely popular, *The Rise and Decline of the Third Reich*, which has been enjoying popularity with wargamers since its introduction in 1976. (Nor does *Computer Third Reich* represent the last ST conversion by Avalon Hill. As you read this, Avalon Hill is boxing the ST version of another fantastically successful board game, *Diplomacy*.)

The computer conversion of *Third Reich* represents three years of Avalon Hill development. The computer equations needed to handle the complex set of rules (that have even more exceptions) was a challenge for Avalon Hill. *Third Reich* has demonstrated high replay value in its 16+ years of popularity. Avalon Hill has attempted to blend and balance their attention to graphics and sound capacity with game playability. As a result, the computer version is not state-of-the-art where sight and sound is concerned. On the other hand, the rush to replace intellectual challenge and real cerebral activity with the new game treasure-hunt philosophy of gaming is also conspicuously absent in this game.

The computer version of the rules is, apparently, based upon an earlier version of the board game rules than the currently published version. Rules pertaining to beachheads also required modification, so that stacking did not exceed what was allowed all over the board and so that the game could be fit into the constraints of the computer game pigeon hole. The boxed version (Version 1.0) of the game allows for infinite movement for airborne units, which is being given movement point limits in the updated version (V1.1) of the game. Other problems, such as the lack of hard disk installation support, will be corrected in a planned future update (V1.2). Avalon Hill plans to have all versions (Atari ST, Amiga, and IBM-PC) hard disk installable. Version 1.1 has changes that address earlier criticisms concerning the exit icon command, which did not allow one the option of going back to an earlier phase of the game rather than ending the phase by accidentally activating the exit. Those who purchase the game are entitled to a free upgrade from Avalon Hill.

In general, the game functions very similarly to the board game, in that the computer representations of cardboard counters can be moved with the mouse from place to place across the board. A deficiency of the mouse-directed movement is that the moves cannot be taken back once the counter is picked up with the mouse.

The game incorporates all the combat results tables and selections from the original game, allowing for selection of the attacking and defending units, as well as selection of combat results of exchange and destruction of these units. The advantage of the computer can be readily seen as play progresses, since the computer handles the voluminous war game statistics, such as remaining movement points, attacking, counter attacking, or defense odds, the random chance factor.

The disadvantage of the computer can also be seen in that situational awareness is limited to those areas of the map that are on the screen, leaving you to use the keys to move the map around for perspective. The computer screen is not the same as having the map, counters, and odds tables spread out before the combatants on a large table. Game players and designers are cognizant of these computer screen limitations and have been using the computer game as an adjunct to board game play. Avalon Hill plans for the IBM version of the game to incorporate a full board view of the playing field that can be toggled into a close up of the board.

Unfortunately, the Atari ST and Amiga versions will not be updated to incorporate this, since Avalon Hill feels that these platforms do not have high enough resolution for this feature to be effective.

Another advantage of the computer is the facility to incorporate modem play and play-by-mail features. Avalon Hill does not intend to incorporate modem play into *Third Reich*, because they feel the time to play the game would prohibit the practicality of modem play. Future games will have modem play, irrespective of Avalon Hill's feelings in this area. Using a mailed disk for play-by-mail is a very effective means of saving games in progress and having multiple games going simultaneously with many opponents. The computer puts the board wargame on the same footing as chess in the play-by-mail area.

Artificial intelligence in *Third Reich* is somewhat limited, since computer intelligence is a misnomer. The only way computers can be made to appear more intelligent is to add some sort of random factor into game play decisions, which is somewhat unsatisfactory. Computers consider moves by assigning numerical values of relative preferability of moves one at a time, a piece at a time, until a comparison of relative values is used to select the right move. The more combinations, called iterations by programmers, of potential moves of pieces that are investigated, and the more precise the numerical assignments and system is, the more intelligent the computer is. *Third Reich* can have over one hundred pieces on the board at any one time, making it extremely difficult to check out all the combinations of moves. *Third Reich* does use this computer chess simulator-like method to select moves rather than the Empire method of just throwing more pieces of greater power at the opposition to win.

The speed settings in *Third Reich* do not relate to the difficulty level of the game or intelligence of the opponent, but on the speed of certain functions across the board. Unfortunately, you cannot change the difficulty settings for the game via speed. The IBM version of the game will have better artificial intelligence, based upon the lessons learned with the Atari ST and Amiga versions. As of this time, the artificial intelligence directs all its energy into a direct frontal assault on the capital of a country, since capturing the capital allows for the incorporation of the country's resources into those available to the conquering country.

Third Reich is an economic as well as a strategic and tactical game that uses seasonal turns or phases of three months each. Units must be purchased at the beginning of each turn or phase from available monetary units. The only way to increase available monetary units is to acquire additional land through conquest. Most often the computer-directed axis opponent will capture Poland early on, in order to quickly increase available monetary units. The computer opponent is extremely aggressive and can be beaten by using more subtle means to out flank the enemy in spite of the importance of capitals to the acquisition of new units.

Computer Third Reich for the Atari ST is a good game in spite of the lack of hard disk installation, since it will play on a 1040 STe with one megabyte of memory and one double-sided floppy disk drive as easily as it plays on a hard disk. This is a great game for a wargame newcomer to get the flavor of the game without being bogged down by voluminous rules and high complexity, which the computer takes over for you. Please consider Avalon Hill's new line of games, so that one of the last American companies to support ST games will not change its mind and cease their support.

The Avalon Hill Game Company, Microcomputer Games Division, 4517 Harford Road, Baltimore, Maryland 21214, 1-410-254-9200. Versions: Atari ST, Amiga; Version planned: IBM-PC. Price: $39.95. Reviewed on an Atari 1040 STe with 1 megabyte of memory and two double sided floppy drives. Copy protection: none. Comes on one single-sided disk with 20-page manual.

■■■■■■■

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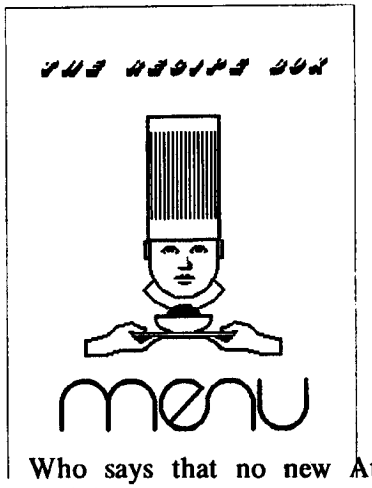

The Recipe Box!

Review by Don Elmore

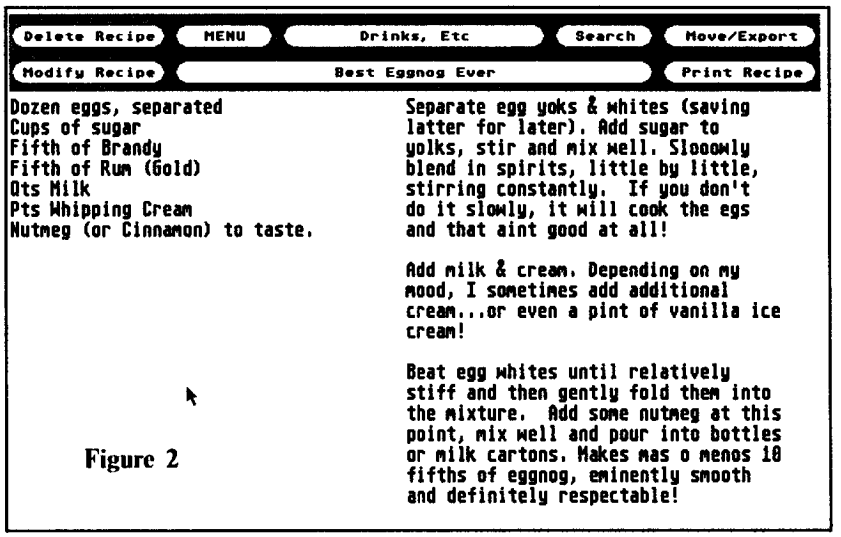

Figure 2

Who says that no new Atari productivity programs are being written? I offer Anthony Watson's *The Recipe Box!* He has written a straightforward, user friendly recipe program that is most impressive. He has spent years perfecting his recipe program. Watson started out writing and storing recipes on his Atari 600 using the *Indus GT* word processor. Remember that one? In 1991 on an Atari 130XE he wrote a program called *The Antic Cookbook* (for *START* magazine), and then "graduated" to the Atari ST and continued perfecting his program, until we have his current version (v3.2) which just about does it all.

The program is both solid and reliable. In fact, it is so good that I am porting over the recipes that I have stored on *Dinner at 8:00* (in the Mac world), Atari's *Assistant Chef*, and those that I put in *Findex V. The Recipe Box* is on my "C" drive, and since I use *Neodesk*, I have the program icon on the desktop so that I can go right to it from bootup.

He has categorized the recipes by chapters; Breads, Desserts, Main Dishes ... and you can choose your chapters any way you want. Figure 1 shows how I have started titling mine. As you can see, you can easily add, rename or delete chapters. The search function is handy and the import button allows you to load recipes from *Asst. Chef*, and *Meal-Master*.

Figure 2 shows one of my personal favorites, and should you select the "Modify Recipe" button, you get Figure 3's options. Renaming and correcting text are self-explanatory. The resize ingredients button defaults to increase by 2 (as shown). Clicking on the Increase button changes the "2," to "3," "4," or however many times you want to increase the proportions. The "Decrease" button downsizes the ingredients.

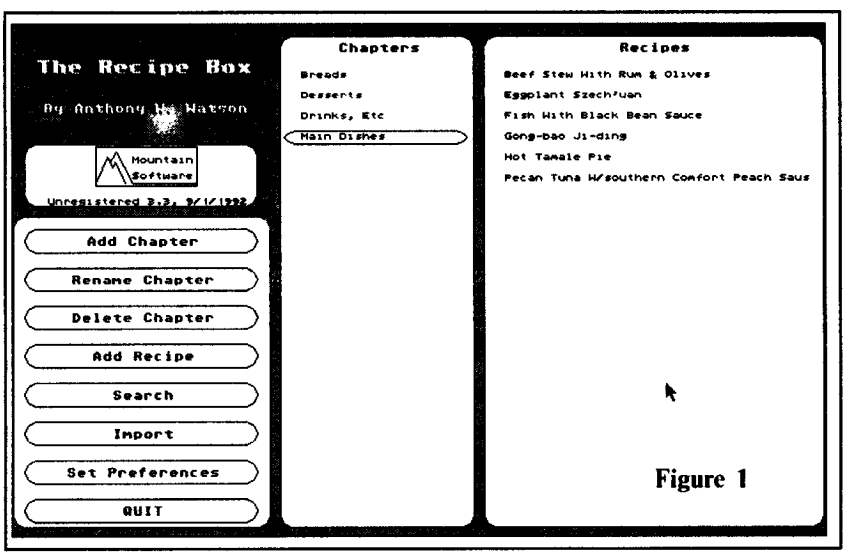

Figure 1

In short, *The Recipe Box*, does it all. Watson says in his somewhat succinct instructions that the program is loaded with help menus and urges the user to experiment and practice. He is right, even I do not have to refer to the written instructions! But, I have saved the best for last. I have been praising this program based largely on my using it on my monochrome monitor. If I were to have to find a "less than positive," comment, it would have been that the program lacks a certain amount of "verve?" Then, I ran it on my color monitor and found it to be totally awesome! Vibrant colors, with a smooth button action much similar to one of the mainstay programs in the IBM world. Entirely UNSHABBY if I

can wax eloquent. This review is not overly long because of the power and ease of use of the program. I am very impressed with Watson's professionalism; he is continuously fine tuning, testing and improving his program.

My copy was given to me by a fellow Atarian who downloaded it from GEnie. After inputting only one of my own recipes, I quickly ran the enclosed "makeform program," which not only registered me as a shareware donator ($20.00) but also gave Watson a profile of my system. Figure 1 shows that my version is 3.2 and I understand that he has replaced it with v 3.4 (which I'm sure I will receive as soon as he processes my registration." If you can't access GEnie, Watson's address is:

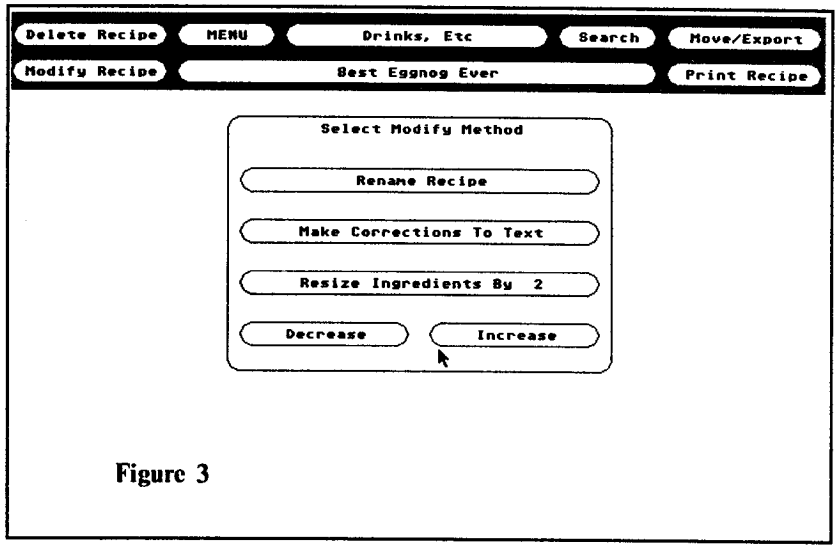

Figure 3

. Anthony Watson
6911 NE Livingston Rd
Camas, WA 98607.

If you want a fantastic recipe program, send for it, I know you won't be disappointed! [Note: Recipe Box! V3.3 is included in the CN Library this month on disk #753. -JW]

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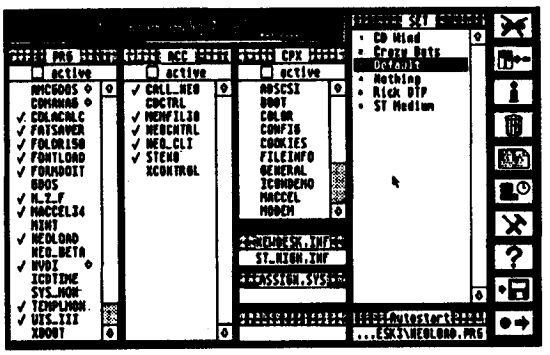

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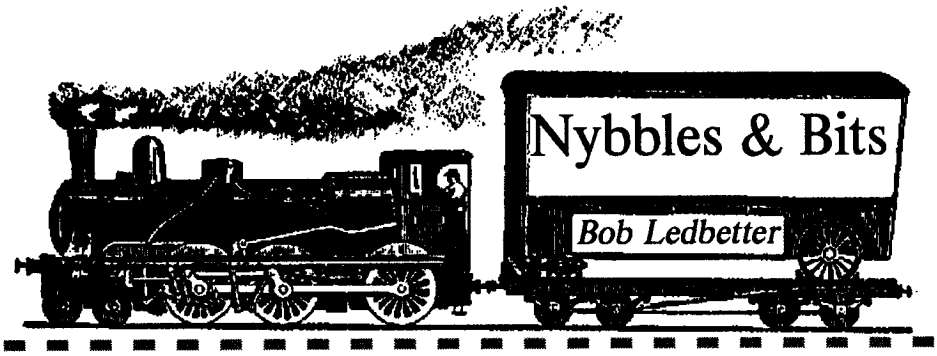


Hi Group!

A few months ago, Joe asked for somebody to "digest the traffic, analyze trends, and follow up on developing news" on the online services. Well, "Nybbles & Bits" is the result of his search, and I will attempt to keep you up-to-date with CompuServe.

I must admit, the first time I logged onto CompuServe (CIS) was a rather interesting experience. Nothing I could not learn, but a bit different. I had received my Introductory Membership packet, which included my temporary User ID and a temporary password along with instructions on how to adjust my communication software, *Interlink ST*, to CompuServe's settings. Also included was a list of the three most helpful commands and instructions on how to use them. Other than that, I was on my own.

A Variety of CIS Services

I actually managed to get a feel for what's available on CIS and found a lot of very interesting things:

Easy Sabre - helps you find the lowest airline fares, make airline or hotel reservations, or rent a car;

Associated Press Online - the latest news updated hourly, including weather, national news, world news, sports and entertainment news;

Peterson's College Database - the electronic version of the directory of US colleges and universities;

Basic Current Stock Quotes - the latest on stock market quotations and other financial services;

Online Today - a daily electronic publication by CompuServe Magazine's editors, offering daily news from the computer world, reports of events on CompuServe itself, software and book reviews, and commentaries;

Practice Forum - learn how to read and write messages, retrieve and send files in the library and how to use CompuServe's forums more effectively;

Consumer Reports - provides brand ratings and recommendations for many consumer products reviewed by Consumers Union;

Grolier's Academic American Encyclopedia - the online edition of the popular encyclopedia;

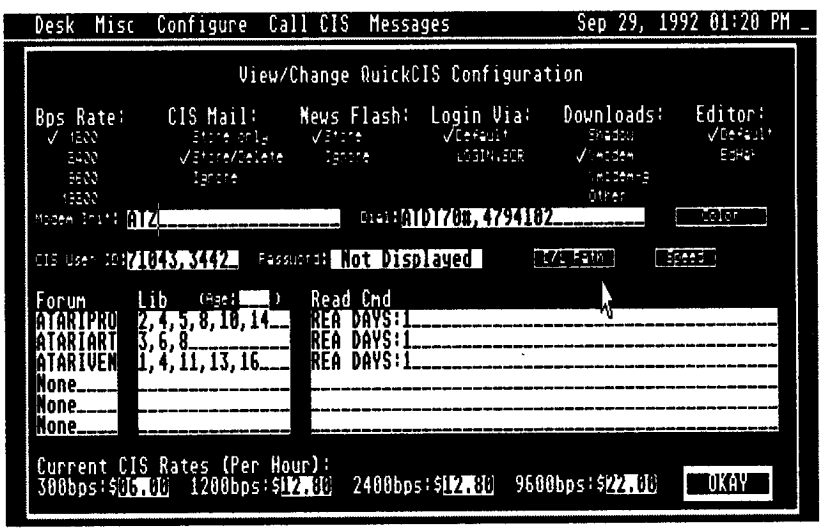
HealthNet - a comprehensive online medical reference source containing a reference library and a section on sports medicine.

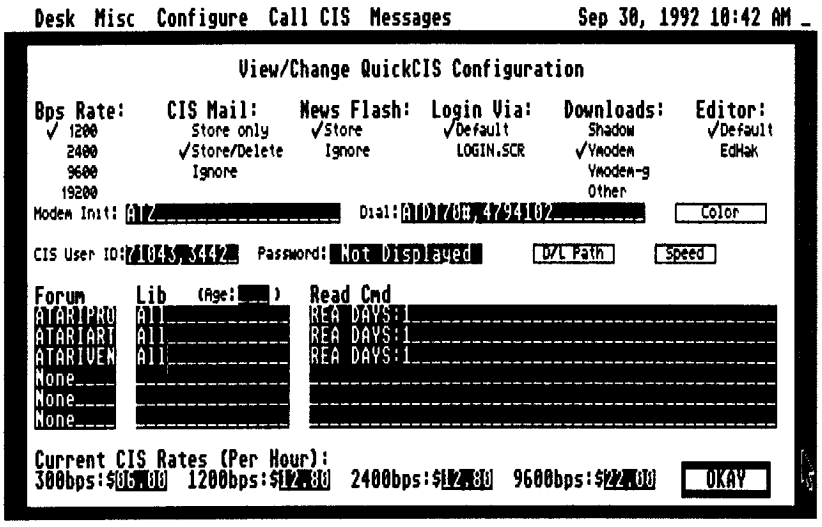
The above are just a few of the many services available. All of these services are included in the basic membership package.

After a few days, another packet of material arrived from CIS that included the New Member Guide. In it I found a *lot* of neat info, including an article by Charles Bowen, "Log On, Log Off Automatically." My lightning fast mind was quick to pick up on the implication, so I delved into the article and found there are actually two automated access programs for the ST. The first is *ST/Forum*, the second is *QuickCIS*.

QuickCIS Makes Access Easy

For my purposes, *QuickCIS* is definitely the better of the two. Whether it's making a "manual" call or an "automated" call, *QuickCIS* makes your online time a snap. With *QCIS*, you can avoid having to learn all the ins and outs of navigating through CompuServe, and cut down on the actual amount of time spent online. If you're going to be keeping tabs on anything on CIS, you should





very seriously consider downloading QWKCIS.TOS and QWKCIS.TXT. Both are found in the Atari Productivity Forum, Library 2, "Telecommunications." You see, while in the Forums you are charged an hourly rate, over and above your basic membership package. Anything that economizes on your time saves you money. [Ed.Note: *QuickCIS* and the *EdHak* demo discussed below are available on CN #747d: The CIS Disk.]

Setting Up QuickCIS

Using *QuickCIS* is a breeze! First off, you set up your configuration by choosing CONFIGURE from *QCIS's* main screen. Once in this interface, you set your baud rate, how to handle your mail, your download protocol, your Editor of preference, modem initialization, your local CompuServe phone number, your user ID, any Forums and Libraries you want to visit and the CIS Forum Rates. Once the above info is entered, a call to CIS is a "punch a button and watch the pretty screen" operation. The watching part is a purely personal option as *QCIS* captures the messages from your specified Forums and Logs Off without any input from you.

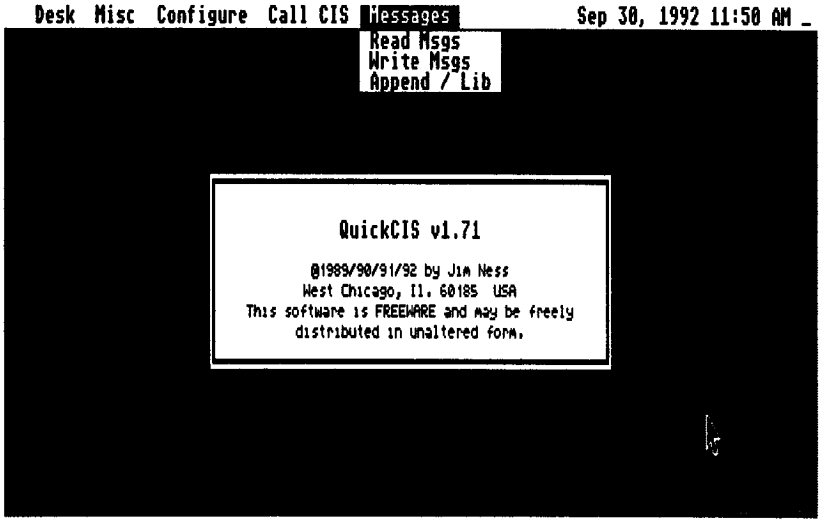
One of four commands will call CompuServe. Using the (M)anual command, allows you to be in control and able to go anywhere in CompuServe. Using the (N)ormal command, QCIS does everything you have set it up to do, then logs off and disconnects. A (D)elayed call is a Normal call that you have scheduled to occur at a later time. The fourth kind of call is the (Q)uick call, which is designed to be used after you have already made a Normal call. The Quick call will send any replies you may have made and download any files you may have marked for downloading. While making a (M)anual call you can still put *QCIS* into automated mode by using [Alternate]+[Q] for a Quick call or [Alternate]+[N] for a Normal call.

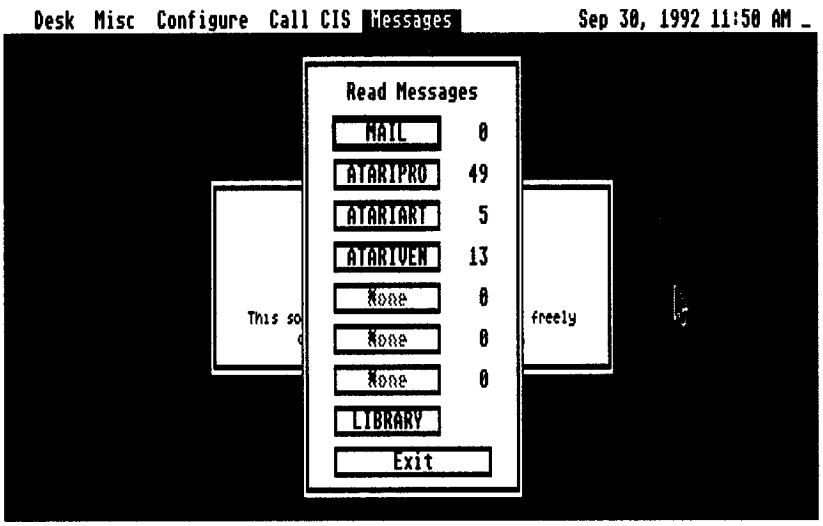
QCIS does have a built-in text editor that you can use to compose messages you wish to post on CompuServe, but this is your basic, nothing fancy text editor and is called when you want to Reply to a message or simply Write a message. Thinking the default editor is a bit too primitive for most people, Jim Ness, the author of *QCIS*, suggests *EdHak* as a better choice. There is a demo version of *EdHak* on CompuServe. It's in the ATARIPRO Forum, and can be used with *QCIS*, but will not save files outside of *QCIS*. Downloading this demo will let you decide if you want to buy the full program.

Reading Messages

Okay, suppose you've called CIS with *QCIS* and you're back to the first *QCIS* screen. How do you (R)ead what you have? Simple. Press the letter [R] or pull down the MESSAGES menu and click on READ MSGS. You are then presented with the "message reading" interface that shows how many messages and from where, Email, AtariPro, AtariArt, etc. Hit [Return] and you'll be taken to the first message in the first area. Progressing to the (N)ext message is as simple as pressing the letter [N] or clicking the LEFT mouse button. Pressing [P] or clicking the RIGHT mouse button will take you to the (P)revious message. If you wish to (R)eply to a message, press [R] and you will be moved to the *QCIS* Editor, or *EdHak*, where you can compose your reply.

The [F4] key is a toggle that will put you into either the message you're replying to or into your re-





ply. Once you've finished that particular reply, hit [Undo] and you will be presented with the "posting" interface. If you're replying to a forum message, you have the option of posting it with the UNF command (unformatted, it goes to CIS exactly as you've typed it), and/or with the PRI command. PRI is the (PRI)vate message command. If a particular forum will not accept the PRI command, *QCIS* will default to MAI command, which will mail the message to the proper CIS Mailbox.

Having done all that, it's time for a (Q)uick call. Hit [Q] or pull down the "Call CIS" menu and select Quick. *QCIS* calls up CIS, posts any Mail you have created, goes to the forums you have selected, posts your replies, downloads the files you have marked (if any), and logs off. This is a good time to grab a cup of coffee, stretch your legs, read *Current Notes*, as *QCIS* is in control. (A bit of the "Twilight Zone" theme should be heard underneath all of this, ‹G›.) When *QCIS* has finished its appointed tasks, you will find yourself back at the main screen. As simple as falling off a log backwards, and not nearly as dangerous!

Manual Calls

Okay, what if you want to "visit" a non-forum area, say for example, looking up a friend's CIS ID number. Instead of making a (Q)uick call right after finishing your replies, simply make a (M)anual call. *QCIS* will log you on, and then stop after the TOP menu of CIS. For this example, you would then type "G DIRECTORY" which will take you to the Member Directory. Press [F10] to turn on *QCIS's* capture buffer and then follow the prompts and get your friend's number. Pressing [F10] turns off the capture buffer. When you're finished going to your non-normal areas, type [ALT]+[Q], and you'll be placed in the (Q)uick call mode, and you should be hearing the refrain from the "Twilight Zone" about now.

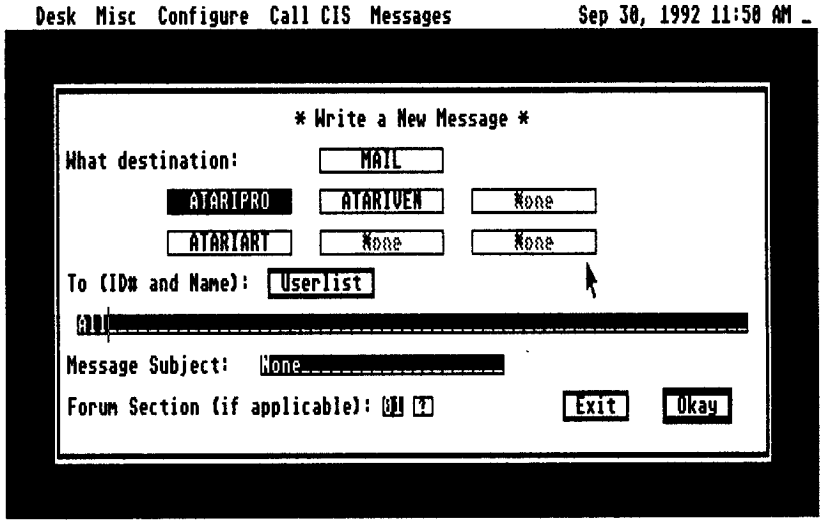
This, however, brings up a short-coming of *QCIS*. You can only enter a name into *QCIS's* "address book" while reading messages, or by editing the USERS.DIR file with a word processor or external text editor. The author, Jim Ness, tells me this will be fixed in version 2, which is in the works. I'll let you know when it's available. But don't wait for v2.x! The current version is already a smooth operator.

Saving Messages

One other nifty feature of *QCIS* before I let you flip a few pages to read "Myths and Mysteries." If you want to keep the messages from any forum, use the "Append/Lib" selection from the Messages menu. This will put the messages in the corresponding Library, permanently. If you want to keep the messages you must do this, as *QCIS* overwrites old messages with incoming messages every time you call CIS. You have your choice of which messages to save (Append), as each forum you visit shows up in the dialogue box, as does a selection for ALL forums.

Well group, that's it for the first installment of "Nybbles & Bits." Now that you've had a Quick-Serving of CompuServe and *QCIS*, d/l yourself a copy or order CN PD disk #747 and let your modem do the walking through the CompuServe pages. If you have any suggestions as to what you'd like me to keep an eye out for, let me know via CIS, 71043,3442.

C U L8er, Bob
North Pole, Alaska.



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Having A Good Time with Calamus

Running Out of Ram by David Barkin

This is an article, review, or tutorial for *Calamus*. Exactly which of the preceding this is, I have yet to determine, but an introduction seems necessary.

Without getting into the exciting and fascinating story of my life (movie rights are easily negotiable for just pennies a year) I would just like to mention that I've always felt myself to be a member of that branch of humanity which avoids cults, fanaticism and various other absurdities. That is, up until I acquired my personal computer, my Atari. This acquisition has resulted in a distinct and dramatic personality change - for the worse. Now shifty eyed and pale of skin I confront users of various other computers with hostility, often leading to mental and physical violence. Huddling in my basement apartment I contemplate ways of quitting my job so that I can continue to huddle in my basement apartment. My dog has become morose, pale of fur and has made many attempts to rip my computer into component ram and rom chips. Byte and bit have two meanings in my home.

Earlier, I was really happy. Since my purchase of *Calamus*, things have started to seriously decline. If I could lie to myself before about avoiding fanaticism, such is no longer the case.

The Calamus Cult, while discouraged by DMC, is a serious menace to certain parts of the Atari community. There are some people out there who use *Calamus* for Desktop Publishing; this is certainly quite reasonable. But they miss the true elegance of the program. Its ease of use. Its world unto itself! They use *Calamus* for productivity. For work. But we, we, the members of the semi-religious Calamus Cult, we **BELIEVE!** Saying all this, the following article is not a cornucopia of tips *but rather an approach to learning my favorite program.*

There Is One Great Myth About Calamus:

If all the icons in *Calamus* were lined up end to end, they would be able to reach from my home in New York to Sunnyvale, California and halfway back.

Another point of seemingly accepted faith, although not on the same level as the preceding, is that *Calamus* is the most difficult program available on the ST and that to use it at all, one must master it.

Well, the truth is quite different on both counts. On the other hand, there is a secret to using *Calamus*, which all members of the Calamus Cult are sworn to secrecy *never to reveal on pain of death! OR WORSE, deprivation of our Calamus Serial Numbers!* Fortunately, DMC's release of their latest update reveals the secret and my oath is canceled.

Secret No. 1

This secret in using *Calamus 1.09N* lies in the "Help" file and in *Calamus SL*, in the much expanded, but equivalent, CKT Macro files. When using *Calamus*, users are familiar with the little messages that appear on the upper right hand corner of the screen as the cursor passes over individual icons. Some may recall that the manual mentions that these messages can be altered by the user and key equivalents assigned. But there is no emphasis placed on these facts. Well there should be. The entire nature of the program changes when customized key equivalents are assigned.

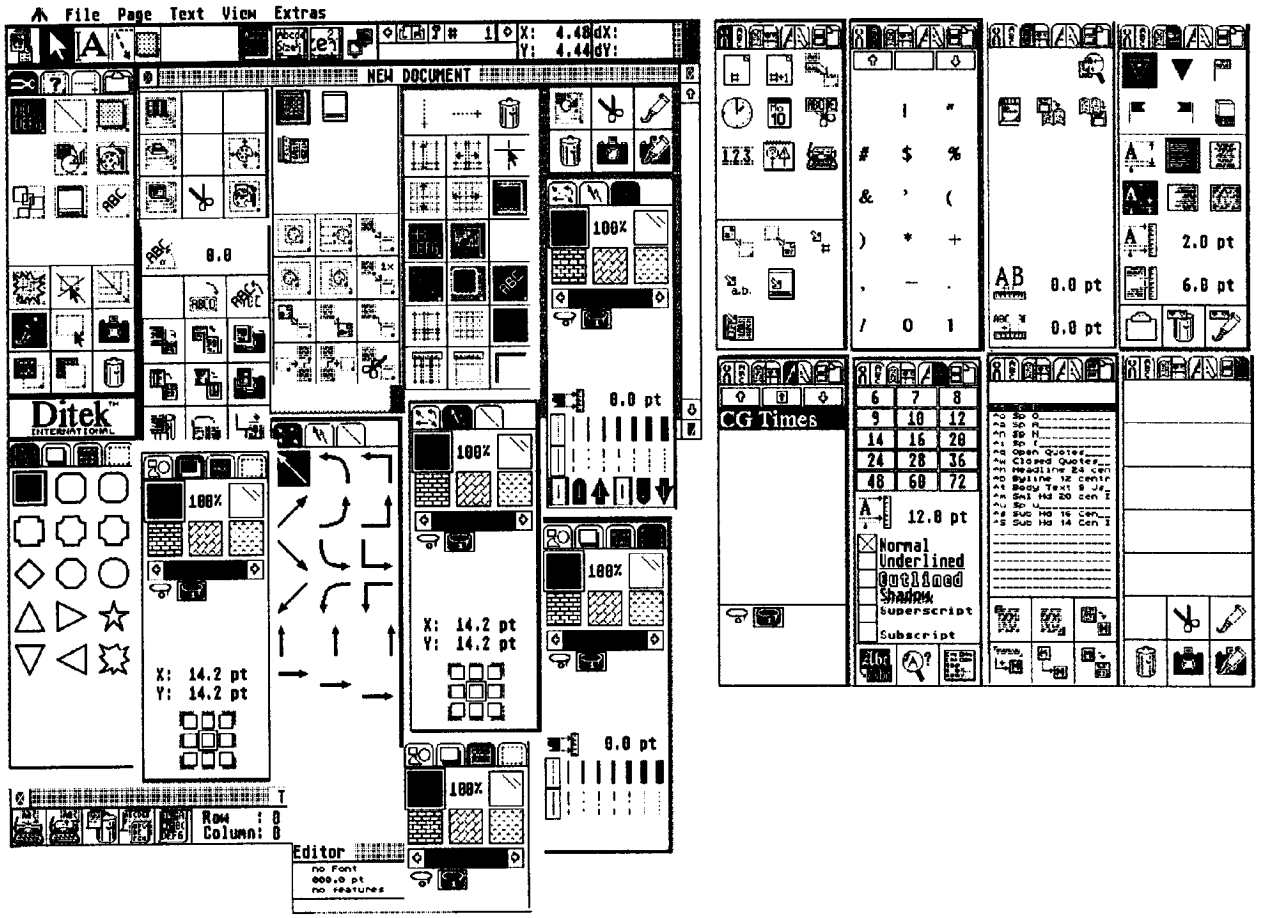
Lets give a small example. Let us say we are creating a simple document of an image with a caption. First I'll create this page using the icons and file menu system. I go to the file drop down menu, click on "load document" and load a previously prepared template called blank vertical. Now I click on the image icon and then create an empty image frame. Then going to the file menu, I hit "import." After selecting "Gem Image" as my import type, I load my picture into the created frame. In this case, this is *not* a half tone image, so I click on the icon for sizing image.

Now I want to add a short caption in the typeface Swiss. I move my mouse to the top of the screen and click on the frame icon and then the text frame icon and then I go to the open text editor icon and type in my caption. After typing, I click on the send text into frame icon and then ...

Whoa! It's written in Times Roman, not Swiss. I click on the fonts icon and then, seeing no Swiss present, I go to the file drop down menu and, hitting the load fonts option, I then load Swiss. I now use the cursor to highlight the text, select Swiss, click on the icon for "text size and effect, and, finally, click on the icon for "resizing text. The text now becomes Swiss.

Pheww...! A lot of work to create a picture with a text label. But what if a good number of these commands had been given key equivalents? Let's take another look at creating this simple page. My key equivalents are in brackets.

I load my template [Alt l] and then draw my image frame, ([Alt m] and then draw the frame.) I open the



Here they are! Most, but not all the icons in *Calamus 1.09N*. Keep in mind that these icons are not in the proper order or even necessarily in the right screen! (I sez to myself "self, they ain't payen youze enough for dis here nightmare accumulation of icons.") But what's more important to remember is that the icons are basically a learning tool and while you can operate the program through them, it is the user defined key-board commands that make the program fly.

text editor [Alt t] and type my text. I then double click on the bracketed font (Times Roman) shown in the text editor (assuming that I've set the parameters to visible). I notice that there is no Swiss font available. I open the load font dialogue [Alt ?], select Swiss, and then, back in the text editor style box, select Swiss for my font. Click on the send text into editor and, presto, I'm done. Much quicker, right? ***Customize your Help File!***

This article will continue, and will continue to contain useful tips, but *Calamus* is too complete a typography system for a short article of useful tips to really teach the program. This article is devoted to giving the user *an approach or overview to using the program not specific tips.* These tips are no doubt useful. Bit the approach is what is going to make using *Calamus* relatively simple.

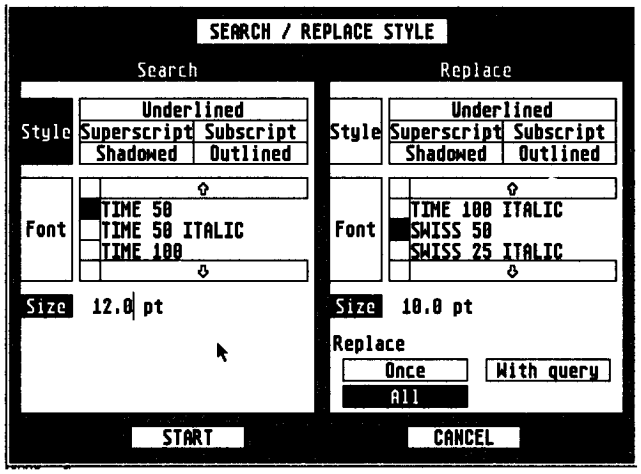
This customization of your "Help" file is one of the two key points in using *Calamus 1.09.* Before I move on to the other, let me just refer back to the preceding example. If I had wanted to determine the size and typeface of the text using just icons, I would have had to wade through half a dozen layers. But aside from the fact that the text editor and, therefore, almost all type commands are available *at any time simply by using the key equivalent [Alt t],* I have also assigned key equivalents to the icons for "get text [Alt o] style" and "restyle [Alt r] text." In other words, on those occasions where it is inconvenient to be in the text editor, hitting a few keys will alter the text anyway I want to. Thus [Alt a] puts me in text mode, [Alt o] will set both the typeface and size of the text and, after making changes in them, [Alt r] will reset the text.

Secret No. 2

Ok, secret number two: *Stay in the text editor.* This is not always possible or desirable, but the text editor loves you; almost everything that you wanted to do with text can be done from within the editor. *Most crashes from Calamus are from people leaving the text editor when they should have stayed.*

Well, perhaps I'm getting a bit carried away here. But you can resize text, change its color, change the typeface, any combination of the above, all from

within the editor. You can search and replace style and text. In most cases, you can alter the text ruler and create new ones all from with the editor. This can be done by *creating macros for left, centered and justified text.* Follow the instructions for creating a macro and save the macro as a ruler. As you examine text from within the editor, this allows you to change the formatting without leaving the editor. Life becomes simple. More importantly, the constant whining that I hear about *Calamus* being unstable disappears dramatically.



The "Style" search and replace dialogue box. Just about anything can be changed without leaving the text editor. Notice that you must highlight the options you want to make. For some reason people (and that includes me) have a hard time remembering this).

Let me present one other quick example of how effective key customization can be. After importing text into a document, it is wise to go over said document page by page to check for errors. In a book of poetry, this can be a nightmare of changing the formatting of each poem. Using just the icons, we must click on the left, center, justified and or right justified icons for each text ruler. Or hunt around in the text ruler screen in order to add a text ruler.

But what if you assigned keys to these icons and the icons for left and right paragraph justification and tab settings? In my case, I've dedicated the function keys for these jobs. This means I can stay in my text screen without jumping back and forth to the ruler screen. By this time the reader must be getting the idea of the beauty of this system.

One point in this customization business is to make yourself happy. Do you have a favorite game with key equivalents? Use them in *Calamus.* Someone once complained to me that DMC should have *assigned* key equivalents and not left it up to the user. Well, I had to hit this person four or five times and then feed him to the dog. Leaving it up to the user means that what is important to the user gets priority. The system is more than beautiful; it shines.

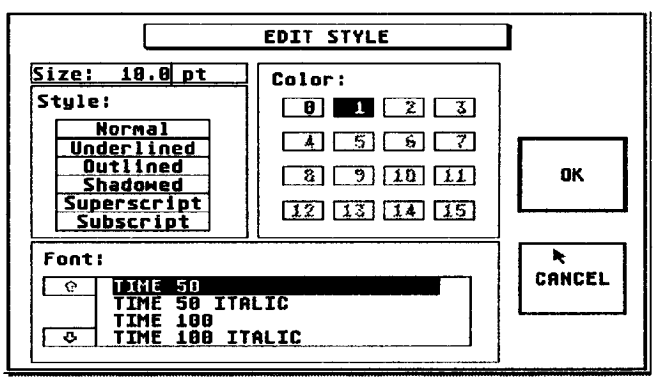
Once you learn to use *Calamus,* using your own system, based on these two tips, no program on any computer in the known universe (except of course for the program "Page Killer Four" from the planet Atair Two in the Cassiopia system) even comes close. Of course, one must take into consideration that *Calamus 1.09* lacks some modern features.

What About Calamus SL?

Calamus version 1, which has reached its final form in 1.09N, is a 1988 program. It lacks the ability to work with color or import color graphics. *But even with these limitations, Calamus 1.09 is still a professional level program.* It took me four hours to typeset a 150 page book of *poetry!.* If any of you want a test of how good a program is for typesetting, try typesetting poetry, with every page a different format and even different formatting within pages.

Looking up at my calender, I, sharp-as-a-whip Barkin, notice that it is 1992, soon to be '93 and *Calamus SL* is DMC's reflection of changing times. *SL* incorporates the newest in modular design for computer programs. Aside from this, *SL* does work in color, does allow importation of color and grayscale graphics, the help file has been changed to a user defined macro recorder, which, in turn, has much greater flexibility. The text editor, as well as being fast, now has a great many additional word processor features and much, much more.

Unfortunately, *SL* contains some rather dumb changes to the text editor. Not enough to counter balance the improvements, but enough to be really annoying. Yes, hard to believe but true, I'm actually going to criticize DMC over their excellent text modules because it could have been better by retaining some of the old features. One can only hope that this won't jeopardize my standing. Next month I'll discuss this new incarnation of *Calamus* and how to shorten the learning curve, if not yours, then at least mine.



The edit "Style" dialogue box. Also reached from within the text editor. In combination with the style changer and the not shown "search and replace text." Everything is possible.

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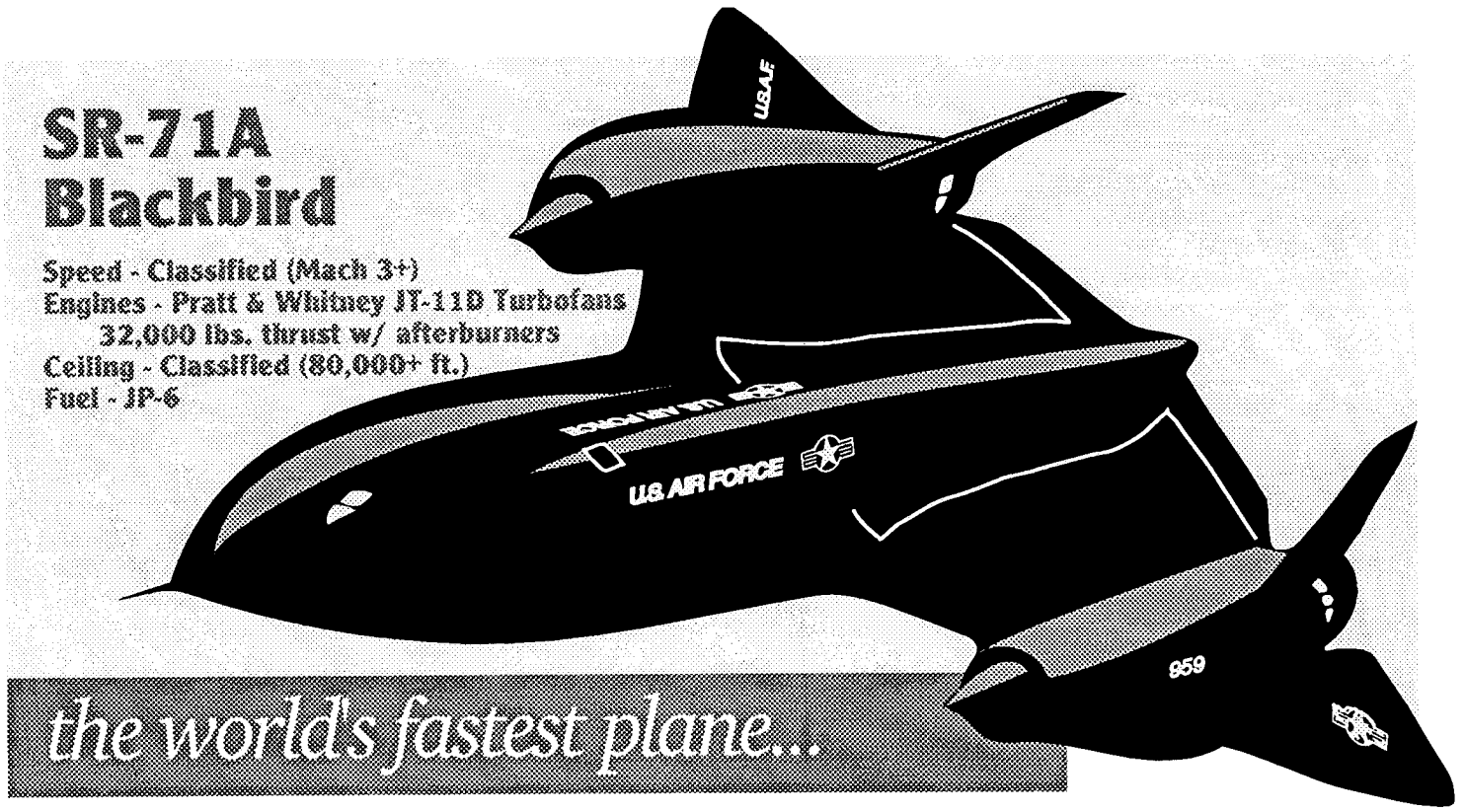

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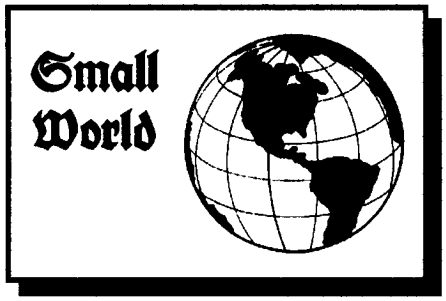

Catching Up:

Eric Update, WAACE '92, Color Spectre, and Goodjob Folks!

by: Dave Small, Copyright 1992

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Introduction

Well, there's quite a bit going on, so I may have to just briefly touch on a few subjects that *really* deserve a full column (or magazine?). Let's dive in.

Eric

Last May our son Eric (10) was hit by a car, and had his right leg broken and left leg torn up. (It was a freak accident). We've always said that Gadgets by Small was rather a family-oriented company (ask the people who saw me changing Jamie's diaper during the Spectre 128 debut!); well, the Smalls *shut down* Gadgets for *all of Summer '92* to take care of Eric.

Eric ended up with a steel rod installed lengthwise through his upper thigh bone to hold it together (you can't just put on a cast; the upper thigh muscles pull the bone diagonally), and Sandy and I took shifts with him doing the dreaded Physical Therapy, repairing the muscles that were torn during the break. (This was especially hard on Sandy, who had knee cartilage surgery twice and knows precisely how P.T. feels, so I tried to do this; we'd watch movies and do P.T. every 15 minutes, for days on end.)

We're talking stretching out tendons that had shortened and doing leg lifts with muscles that had torn... real fun stuff. For a long time, we got as much sleep as parents with a brand new baby in the house, for Eric had really painful muscle spasms at night after P.T; I slept many a night with Eric at the hospital and at home to cut down the time it took to get him some painkillers, and because I had promised him I'd stay with him no matter what when he was most scared.

We had some people get hacked off at us for closing down Gadgets, and I'm sorry they got mad, but those are our priorities. Eric is more important than the FAX machine! On the other hand, other people reacted Quite Differently. We left notes on GEnie and Compuserve and Usenet explaining the situation, and many people wrote get-well cards to Eric; for example, Dave Flory, a San Jose policeman, wrote about breaking some of his own bones while riding a motorcycle, and encouraged Eric to hang in there with the therapy until he was all better.

It *REALLY* cheered Eric up that all these people wrote and FAXed in; thanks to all of you who did! I made it a daily practice to go print out the GEnie notes to Eric and take them to him, and it really helped. (You know, the well-wishers *way* outnumbered the people who were complaining. Maybe there is something to this electronic network stuff!)

The result of all our summer's work was that while Eric attended his 4th grade "graduation" in June using a 4-legged walker and barely getting around, by the next September's school opening and 5th grade, he was bouncing around without even a crutch in sight, showing off his scars (turning the other boys *green* with envy (and discovering that girls DON'T get into that sorta stuff)), running full speed up and down stairs, rough-housing with other kids, and as of the last X-rays, he has no permanent damage *at all* that we know of.

In fact, he says he's like The Terminator; he has steel bones! (He is very proud of this. Quote: "Bullets would bounce off!")

It's obvious to me that the guardian angels were definitely putting in overtime, and it is positively amazing how fast kids heal. Thank Heavens. I look at what happened and it was a matter of inches. Sandy's belief in building stuff solidly and so well it could stop a car (!) ... and the frame of the car involved that saved Eric. Even a "minor" upper leg break is very serious; the bone can cut through a femoral artery or nerves and that's it.

As for the firemen, paramedics, police and probably a K-9 unit that blocked our street and provided hours of entertainment for our neighborhood, well, they were pros. I didn't know splints came in "inflatable," but they did, and they bent over backwards to reassure Eric all the way. Me, I told him before anyone got there that I would go wherever he went, rode in the ambulance and such, and stayed with him (the paras might have bent a rule to let me, but they are that sort of people); our next door neighbor proved what a friend he was by staying ultra-late to watch our other kids while Sandy and I were at the hospital.

And so it happens the on-call orthopedics doctor is possibly the finest in Denver and among the best there is, that night. Like I say, guardian angels.

The doctor says it's fine if he goes skiing, but I'm not sure *I* can handle that quite yet.

After Eric was home and life was starting to get back to normal, we sent out a FAX to all our dealers here and overseas, complete with a picture of Eric in traction and Daddy minus 72 hours of sleep, and a scanned-in X-ray showing The Rod, and explained what had happened. It apparently got reprinted and passed around quite a bit. For example, Ralph Mariano's *ST-Report* printed it, and honestly, Ralph and I have had our disagreements. But it didn't matter. In general, it was wonderful to see how quickly the "on-

line politics" disappeared and how people cared about Eric, and, really, how very few dweebs there were; people were very patient with us, and many complimented us on shutting down for Eric (and delaying their order's shipment). It gives ya hope ... even in this election year! (grin)

We're now ramping Gadgets back up, trying to catch up with Quite Overdue FAXes, shipping SST and MegaTalk (finally!, it ships!) and out the door go ever-more GCRs; we're coming up on the SST's first shipping birthday next February, in fact. As for GCR, it's been back-ordered for years now, and despite our best efforts and making as many as we can per batch, we have *never* gotten it to where we actually have some on the shelf; the best we've done is cut down on the waiting list. It looks like people really do like the "insurance factor" of having a GCR around, "just in case" Atari does a Titanic. We're nearly caught up on SST backorders (after doing a week solid of SST board tests, until the test Mega died of static) and working hard shipping MegaTalk backorders; both take lots of testing so we can only ship so many each day.

You're going to think it odd for me to say this, given the thought-climate surrounding Atari, but these are the good old days, as far as Gadgets is concerned. Eric's okay.

WAACE '92

WAACE was very successful, and the most fun I've had at a computer show. We brought our Falcon030 in the event Atari didn't (in fact, as we packed up for the show, it did not appear all that likely Atari was even coming to the show!) and I wanted to give people some hands-on time with the Falcon. Canned demos are one thing; letting someone play with the machine is quite another.

A month previously, I didn't bring a Falcon to the Glendale show, and I really regretted it. Naturally, Atari was supposed to bring Falcons to Glendale ... well, *THE* Falcon they brought was on a gold-plated podium surrounded by a SWAT team armed with H&K MP-5 submachine guns; anyone trying to touch the machine was summarily riddled, which might explain why the press releases about Falcon are *SO* full of tech errors. Me ... I wanted people to be able to "touch and feel," and make their own judgment, so I brought out the Falcon, just in case there weren't any others at the show, and it looked that way the Wednesday before the weekend.

Dave Troy and Jennifer Rucker up at Toad Computers had a "Fest Before The Fest" prior to WAACE for two days, and I came for that. I would have come out for that alone, for these are two of the best people I have ever known. As it was, I got to see their new store, see retail and mail order in action (something I long wanted to do), meet a zillion new people, even watch SST's go out the door (a very nice feeling), and most importantly, talk with Dave and Jennifer for hours after things closed. In turn, they were the best hosts imaginable for an out-of-towner.

So for four days (two Fest, two WAACE) we *constantly* opened up our Falcon, showed folks the innards, let them play with the keyboard and "check it out," both VGA and with a regular Atari color monitor (SC1224, not VGA). It's probably a miracle the Falcon still runs and didn't get static zapped.

Miracle of miracles, at closing Thursday some later-revision Falcons showed up from Atari. But ... they didn't have any of the video adaptor connectors! There is one common DB-19 video output connector on Falcon; you plug in a different connector which matches to an SC1224 or VGA or SM124 or whatever depending on what monitor you want to run. Well, I just happened to have a VGA and a SC1224 adaptor ... so even though later revision Falcons showed up, bringing my Falcon wasn't in vain. Soon two Falcons were running and being extensively worked out.

Since there were these Falcons at the Toad Computers Fest without the "WAACE mobbing effect," those who attended the Fest had a *really* good time; no "cover charge," new hardware and demos to see, and hands-on time. I found I actually could have a conversation with someone and not get interrupted! This went on through Friday night, when we drove down from Severna Park (on the road to Baltimore) to the Dulles Airport Tollway and to the Sheraton for the show. We brought the Falcons Atari had shipped to Toad Computers.

Bill Rehbock materialized at this point. I must say he came up with a *fine* banquet talk at the niche the Falcon was aimed at, the marketing research pointing to it, and he had a spectacular video run by the Falcon with the aid of John Morales, the eternal Atari MIDI rep. As I will personally tell you, niches are a Good Thing, and Atari does seem to have some idea of what they're aiming for this time. No more "Fire, Ready, Aim!" I'm sure there will be endless discussions of the Falcon and WAACE elsewhere in the magazine, but for me the most lasting impression was one of *optimism about the future* ... no kidding! ... in the crowd of Atari users at the end of the banquet. People were buzzing with excitement.

If you'd like a preview of this talk, read last month's magazine by (yes) Dave Troy, which shows a strong ability to predict the future; Dave saw the rollout of Falcon at Dusseldorf and has a very clear idea of what the machine is for and its niche. Go on, pick up the issue and read it; stop telling yourself you only read *CN* for the pictures!

At the WAACE show, things picked up. We had both the Gadgets Falcon and the newer rev Falcon, and showed them both days to quite a crowd. Interestingly, we also had unexpectedly strong interest in George Richardson's Chromax card, which is the video display card people get when they arrive in ST heaven. George ran out of Chromax flyers by noon Saturday. (!) Lots of people want Nifty New Graphics; it's time to upgrade their machines.

For the customary Dave Small seminar, Gadgets rented out a VCR and TV, and we showed "Warp Drive," a home movie about the Camaro discussed in a previous *Current*

Notes (the first chapter of the SST manual, about why speed is important and why we make accelerators.) Last year, of course, we showed "Burst Mode," which was supposed to be about the 68030 CPU, but was really a clip of me rattling off 30 M-16 rounds at full auto, a fun thing to do to a crowd.

Since I love the sound of the engine winding up, I hope the people in the room forgive me for putting the stage microphone next to the TV speaker and cranking it up ... but it gave me goose pimples to hear the whole room reverberating to the 454 engine winding up, and I sorta enjoyed counting off the entrance-ramp speeds for the people in back (100... 110... 120...130, then I had to ease off to merge into traffic).

Spectre in Color (The Final Frontier)

Every other question at the Gadgets table was, "When are you going to make Spectre do color?" This leaves me with mixed feelings. It's always a good thing to have a customer want something you can build, even if it will cost you your remaining sanity. This one might be close!

But ... there's some real "gotchas." Because Apple did color with "bitfield opcodes," a 68000 processor *will not run Color Quickdraw*, the basis for color, period, end of story. It takes at least a 68020 or 68030 to do color. That's one fairly expensive upgrade for most users. Second, the GCR would have to be changed to accommodate 256K or 512K ROMs (or ROM SIMMs), depending on which ROM chipset is most available. That's -another- upgrade (probably a whole new PC board design, in fact), since the Atari cartridge port can only address 128K.

Oh, yes: There's all SORTS of different "256K Mac ROMs"...

MAC II	(68020, uses four 64K DIP EPROMs)
MAC IIx	(68030, uses single ROM SIMM)
SE	(68000, NO COLOR QUICKDRAW!!)
SE-30	(68030, uses single ROM SIMM)
MAC IIcx	(68030, uses single ROM SIMM)

plus the IIfx, IIci, IIsi, and all the other alphabet-soup names that Sculley Sugar Water Marketing has given us. Some of THOSE ROM sets are 512K!

PLEASE don't run out and get some random set of 256K's on the assumption you want to beat the crowd. The cost of these ROMs varies *wildly*, and it's quite possible only one type will work. And we have definitely NOT decided to do this ... but we've stopped saying "No," too.

Third, you need a monitor that will do 640 x 480 in color, which means VGA, another $400 or so expense.

And what computer are you going to run this on?

Look, no Atari computer (until now) has had good enough high-resolution graphics to even bother doing this! We only had the 68030 in one Atari box, the TT. The TT, in hi-res color, does 16 colors. Believe you me, the Mac II ships with 16 hi-res colors from the factory, and the #1 upgrade everyone does first thing is get more video RAM, so the Mac will do 256 colors. I know; we did this on two Mac II machines! And yes, while aftermarket people put out Mega or TT color cards capable of *much* better resolution (notably Crazy Dots, imported by the Gribnif "C" programmers, *grin*), most use IBM-style video generators which rely on the insane, 64K segmented satanic memory setup to operate. I would find it nearly impossible to get this working on the non-segmented memory 68030 processor... maybe some kludge with the MMU to swap pages, and I hear moans out there about how slow THAT would be!

(Do I hear the sound of a TT VME-slot Chromax? Hmmm...)

But the Falcon is the new card in all of this. It has the 68030 that Color Quickdraw needs. It's a 16 MHz 68030 on a 16-bit bus (NOT 32 bit, contrary to Atari's specs), with truly fierce video, and it kicks out 640 x 480 in 256 colors. It is *just possible* I could make the Atari display act like a Mac II standard 256 color video card, or possibly, use the 15-bit "true color" mode. (The highest resolution display modes are pretty weird to program; it took me *three days* to get 16 color bars across the screen, and Apple has similarly weird color modes. I plead no documentation.)

(For the role of memory in video, See Also: the discussion of SST and Video, Part 1, early last year; there's a constant tug of war over memory between video and the CPU.)

And the Falcon has an internal set of "stakes" (pins sticking up into the air) which we could hook to a connector on a circuit board and attach to an internal GCR unit and have a place to put these new 256K ROMs. Well, that's why we've had a Falcon since May '92; Atari is interested. Given our installed base, this is not a dumb move; Atari is beginning to get *some* idea of how many zillion GCR's really are out there. (We, of course, never give out shipped numbers. Neither do they.)

So, yes, I probably could make it go with one heck of a lot of work. Having done the 64K and 128K ROMs, I'll tell you, we're talking a *serious* amount of work here; Color Quickdraw is no minor piece of code.

(And I keep remembering how intimidated I felt by the 128K ROMs, and how it took just three months for them to start working. Do you suppose my luck would hold true a third time?)

Talk about a throw of the dice! Yes, we can do it ... but will there be enough Falcons to sell to!?! Nearly everyone who saw Falcon agreed it was nice; many said they wanted one; everyone agreed a Color GCR would be excellent and triumphant, but people were worried Atari would butcher the marketing ("again" was the word I heard repeatedly), particularly USA marketing. Atari has limited resources these days; a truly sobering *Forbes* article appeared recently discussing Atari's finances in detail, leaving a

grim picture, but it did conclude that Atari had enough cash left to launch the Falcon well. (I have this mental image of a bird being kicked out of a nest by someone saying, "Fly, dammit!")

Which leaves Gadgets with one tough decision. Companies, in general, exist to concentrate resources to solve problems that otherwise could not be solved. We simply do not know how many Falcons will sell, and if there is enough of a market for a Color GCR for that machine, and a closely related board for an 68030 SST equipped ST or TT. (Yes, advice is welcome! – we have a GEnie topic just for this discussion. Feel free to email or FAX. The telephone number is hopeless between catchup work, tech support, orders, and whatever.)

And the name ... Spectre GCR has always been the most mis-pronouncedproduct name in the computer world. We always get people asking for the "Spectrum GRC" or the "Spectarr" or whatever. What's going to happen when/if a Spectre CGCR (Color GCR) shows up? Why, it could be the end of civilization! So if you have a nifty new name, it's time to let us know. Mac emulation has definitely risen from the dead (the true story of the derivation of "Spectre") and we can read Group Coded Recording (GCR) disks; perhaps we can "move on" to a new name for a new product. Here's your chance for fame.

Good Job, Folks; Goodbye and Good Luck!

Some people at Atari are gone, now, and I thought it might be appropriate to take a moment and thank them for what they did.

John Townsend and Ken Badertscher put in killer hours (80-100 hour weeks) on Sparrow (as the Falcon030 was called) getting it running and getting the XBIOS done. Ken burned out finally, and left; he is now onboard with Taligent, the joint IBM/Apple "Pink" venture. He's got a killer 486 box now. Ken also designed the CPX control panel concept that Cary Gee implemented; if you like CPX, that's Ken.

John is still hanging in there and has grown into a very good programmer from his tech-support days. If you think the Falcon is cool, tell him; he and Ken got color icons, the 3-D "look" to buttons and whatnot, and popup menus into TOS by the Burrell Smith method ("tell 'em later"). He's on GEnie.

Mina is gone from Atari. This quiet soul did HDX, the hard disk driver, for years, improving it in many ways. Possibly her last effort was Falcon HDX; it handles ACSI, TT-style SCSI, Falcon-style SCSI (caution, TT SCSI is different from Falcon SCSI; Atari hid the SCSI chip behind the DMA chip, like the floppy chip), and the Falcon IDE drive. I don't know where Min went to, but I hope it involved a long vacation; I always liked her style and her code is quite good.

Allan Pratt, who fixed that damned-blast-it "40 Folder" bug and the ENDLESS wait for a file to store when the hard disk got full, by totally rewriting GEMDOS for TOS 1.4, is gone to Taligent as well. I hope they don't use folders at Taligent. Allan helped MultiTOS along quite a bit and was active on USENET answering questions. And Slavik, whose name only appeared on the Moniterm driver code but who did far more I can't talk about, is also gone.

Taligent only hires really good programmers; remember, they are sorting through stacks of resumes from people laid off from Apple.

Cindy Claveran, a name from long ago (developer support), won Employee of the Year from SEGA; she built a 60 person division from nothing.

I have always felt, and said, Atari had the people to get the job done. (Hanging onto them is another story, and another issue, involving not stepping over dollar bills to pick up pennies.) Seeing how other companies evaluate the ex-Atari talent is interesting, isn't it?

And Until Next Month ...

No time to mention the upcoming Hacker's convention, which is looking to be possibly the best that ever was; no time to talk about Gary Hudson's Skyrocket, an orbit-capable aircraft you will be hearing about; no time to tell you where to find the ex-START editor in Terminator II; no time for Spaceship Warlock.

I've had a Falcon awhile and have some concept of what it's for, at least. So next month, let's talk about the pros and cons of buying a Falcon.

Read "Fallen Angels," by Flynn, Pournelle, and Niven. It would be a steal at twice the price.

Oh, Yes ...

There's just one thing I personally consider more important than anything else, so I saved it until the end of the column.

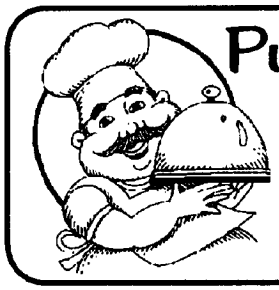
If all goes well (knock wood!), Dave Troy and Jennifer Rucker of Toad Computers are getting married about the time this issue comes out, and these are two *wonderful* people. I'm not sure people in the Atari community realize quite how lucky they are to have these two with us; we would be far worse off without them. Did you SEE their catalog!?! These folks work harder than you would believe; I saw it while visiting.

I do know they took time off to be host to an out-of-towner and show him the Naval Academy at Annapolis and swap stories for days, and I hope to be friends with them forever. I'll get to the wedding if I can.

In the meantime, looking back from 11 years with Sandy and 10 with Eric, all the best from us here at Gadgets to Jennifer and Dave. Weddings, and kids, are the best news there is.

Note: "Tadpole" jokes are to be considered banned. Violators will be towed.

GEnie: DAVESMALL
CIS: 76606,666
InterNet: dsmall@well.sf.ca.us
Wife: "Will you GO TO SLEEP?"



Public Domain Potpourri

by Brian Miller

Atari Bashers VS Atari Chauvinists

For some time now I must admit to having some rather uncomfortable feelings. I often bristle as I read commentary about our Atari ST. Each of us is entitled to an opinion about how the ST fares with the rest of the computing world. However, I have grown weary of both positive and negative distortions that are pawned off as gospel truth. I have wrestled with whether I should use this shareware/public domain column to further elaborate this concern. I decided I would, since the prosperity of the Atari Community has an impact on the number and quality of shareware titles that are available.

In This Corner, the Atari Bashers

On one hand "Atari Bashers" upset me. This angry group is bent on letting everyone know how bitterly disappointed they are in Atari, and in the way our computer has slid behind the times. To some extent I share that disappointment. However, I realize there are many factors that must be analyzed to assess why the ST does not hold as high a place of esteem in the industry that we may have predicted a few years ago. The economy, the glut of competing products and a host of other reasons must be considered to determine where and why things have gone awry.

For my part, I have never quite understood Atari's marketing strategy. At times new products are announced that never appear. This occurs less frequently now, though delays are common. By the time a product is released it often fails to live up to our expectations, or has lost its competitive edge. I am equally dismayed that Atari has allowed their tried and true products to go largely unnoticed. This has been a perennial complaint of ST enthusiasts, but I suspect Portfolio and Lynx owners share a similar concern.

Despite these concerns, I know the ST continues to be a solid performer. A fairly recent *Current Notes* article pointed out that making direct comparisons between the ST and IBM compatibles is difficult. The ST was built for graphics applications. Therefore, PCs need a faster 386 microprocessor to catch up to the ST, even with its older and slower 6800 Motorola chip. Though *Windows 3.1* entices many with its detailed graphics and friendly appearance, that friendliness may be only skin deep. I have been using *Windows* for some time, and I still get befuddled. I have yet to get the hang of all its window buttons. *Windows'* new and improved File Manager is still cumbersome to use.

While the ST lacks the clarity of *Windows'* VGA graphics, the ST Desktop provides an easier environment in which to work. The mouse operations are a lot easier to figure out, and you waste less time repeating the same mistakes.

Windows users face more insidious problems than mouse click cramps. For example, if you make a mistake while installing a program, or if you try to execute some DOS utility programs from within *Windows*, you run the serious risk of corrupting files. I have had to reformat my hard drive twice within the past month because of dangerous conflicts that were written to my autoexec.bat and config.sys files during the installation process of *Windows* insensitive software. Rearranging the programs within the ST's autofolder is infinitely easier, by comparison, and much less hazardous.

In the Opposing Corner, the Atari Chauvinists

In my opinion at least, an even bigger threat to the Atari community than the bashers are the Atari Chauvinists. These folks act as though they have been living under a rock since 1985. This group speaks of the ST as though no other computer comes close to matching its "power without the price."That was certainly the case when the ST was first introduced, but it hardly holds true any longer. These people would have the ST community believe that PC users are still stuck at the DOS C:\ prompt using programs that are user vicious. They further mislead us by describing Macintosh computers as beyond the reach of the middle class pocket book.

Many PC users have abandoned their primitive XT-based computers for a wide variety of 386 and 486 speedsters. You don't need to travel miles to find a retailer. In fact, most department store chains carry a nice assortment of PCs and Macs. Some have grudgingly conceded that the ST's price advantage may have diminished somewhat. These people often try to rationalize this unfavorable shift by suggesting a PC will cost hundreds more by the time sufficient memory is added to run *Windows*. Their perception is simply inaccurate.

I recently had to purchase a new PC to help me keep up with my work assignments. I would have liked to have considered an ST but compatibility with the office is of paramount importance. I was able to buy a 486 DX with 4 megabytes of RAM, two high-density disk drives, an internal FAX modem and a 175-megabyte hard drive for $1,600. Had I wanted to buy a 386 DX, my total cost would have been under $1,000. I wouldn't have needed to spend hundreds more to run *Windows* or other software. That price would have included 4 Mb of RAM and a 105-megabyte hard drive. The FAX modem and other peripherals were included in the base price as well.

While Macintosh computers were originally more expensive than STs, it's fairly easy these days to find a bargain. In fact, a number of people from my office have recently purchased the Mac Power Book 100 at a local Price Club.

$895.00 will buy this portable Mac with 4 megabytes of ram, System 7, a 40-megabyte hard drive, and a 3 1/2" disk drive. To my knowledge, the ST Book has yet to be released, and it will not include a floppy drive.

For ST users who already have made an investment in ST hardware and software, trading up to the newer STe or MegaSTe is a fairly sure bet. You can more economically gain additional memory, newer TOS, and stereo sound by trading in your aging Atari for a new STe than you could by hot-rodding your old machine. However, if you are starting from scratch, the initial investment for an Atari STe may be considerably more than if you were willing to settle for a PC.

A number of ST retailers offer Mega deals that include a 1.44 megabyte floppy drive, and reduced prices for hard drives and monitors. By my calculations, a Mega 4 will cost from $1,300 to $1,500 by the time you add a 50-megabyte hard drive and color monitor. If you need a modem and software, you will have to come up with even more bucks.

ST loyalists often choose to ignore the relative scarcity of software that is available for the ST, compared to the quantity and quality of software for either the PC or Mac. If you are fluent in German, you will have an easier time finding ST software that meets your needs. The Fatherland produces *Calamus* and some of the better applications that run on our machine. In contrast, some of the more significant American software companies no longer produce ST titles. Word Perfect provides indirect support. They will allow registered ST and Amiga customers a generous discount on their newest version of *WordPerfect* for either the PC or the Mac.

If you plan to use your ST for Midi applications or Desktop publishing, you should have no problem finding software that not only meets your needs, but is still competitive with software available for other computing platforms. If you would be content using an older version of *WordPerfect*, you still will have a powerful word processor. *WordPerfect* will assure you a good deal of compatibility with the rest of the computing world if that's needed. *WordFlair II* is another fairly powerful word processing program. It includes a spelling checker and many of the standard features found in other programs. It incorporates some simple charting and database functions, too. While *WordFlair* may be unique among ST word processing programs, these features have been standard fare for *Ami Pro* and other *Window's*-based word processing applications.

Since 1985 the PC has made significant strides in developing WYSIWYG software. Sure, you can still find many text-based programs for die hard DOS users. However, with much of the newer software, you not only see what you get, but *how you see it* is executed consistently across programs.

Windows programs, like many of the ST's, share a common Graphic Interface. Once you learn to master one program in *Windows*, learning to use a new application is relatively painless. *Windows 3.1* and Mac's *System Seven* include True Type. True Type represents a font scaling technology in which the "rasterizer" is built in the font. True Type will let you enjoy the same scalable fonts with any *Windows* application. More importantly, you can share a document, including the specific fonts you have chosen, with anyone else who uses True Type, regardless of whether they have the same font in their system. *Windows* also supports Adobe as well as numerous other fonts and font managers. When, and if, Atari is able to make font scaling technology accessible, then perhaps software developers may be more encouraged to write new programs for the ST.

Most *Windows'* programs support Dynamic Linking and Object Packing. These features allow you to link information from one program to another. Information can be updated from its parent program or through the program it has been attached to. For example, you can create a picture with the *Windows'* paint accessory included with *Windows*. You can copy that picture to the Clipboard; switch to a *Windows'* word processor; and insert the picture into the word processing document. If you later double click on the picture, the paint program opens, allowing you to make changes and those changes would be reflected in your word processing document.

Without a doubt, *DOS*, *Windows*, and the PC World are far from perfect, but ST chauvinists make fools of the rest of us when they distort information about the progress that has been made over the past few years. Joe Waters' comments in September's *Current Notes* regarding the ST and PC world offer an insightful look at the changes that have taken place. For content ST users happy with their collection of software, the problems that have beset the Atari ST should be no reason to abandon ship. For those of us who may have manned the life boats already, there is news about the next generation of ST computers. If this computer lives up to its advance billing, the most disgruntled of Atari malcontents may have to agree that we jumped ship too soon.

The Falcon Lands a Knockout Punch?

Though a U.S release date is still uncertain, the Falcon030 may appease the severest critics. If you want more detailed information about the Falcon, you can read the report in this issue of *Current Notes*, or log onto any Atari Bulletin Board to hear the latest news. From what I have gleaned, the Falcon will use Motorola's 68030 chip, support high resolution color graphics with a standard VGA monitor, and include a high-density disk drive. The Falcon can be configured with up to 18 megs of RAM, and can be purchased with an internal hard drive. Of greater importance, the Falcon is a multi-tasking computer. For those who have been thinking of equipping their PCs with the newly released ST emulation card and software, why bother. The Falcon will also contain a socket for a 386SX chip. Why settle for a Gemulator, when you can have a Dosulator instead??

In Time for the AtariFest?

Following last year's Washington Area AtariFest, I confided my ambivalence in attending this popular event. I have nothing but praise for this annual affair, but noisy, crowded gatherings run counter to my sedentary nature. I suggested that we Atari Users are drawn to Atari shows by the same primal drive that cause salmon to swim upstream. After all,

what salmon in his right mind would freely choose to make this fateful journey? He either becomes the catch of the day for a Grizzly with incredibly bad breath, or if his luck holds out, dies of anorexia after he has fertilized a few eggs.

Modern research holds that the scent of their home stream triggers the hapless salmon to make this insane trek. Perhaps we Atari users return to these annual Galas because we think we've caught a whiff of something overpowering and irresistible. At the risk of mixing metaphors, we are compelled to find out first hand whether our senses have been true, or whether we have been blindly led down a false trail. Hopefully, this year's event will give us real promise of change that will make the rest of the computing world take notice. [Ed.Note: Brian's column arrived too late for the October issue, but still before the '92 Atarifest, which is reported on elsewhere in this issue.]

I Feel Much Better Now, Thank You

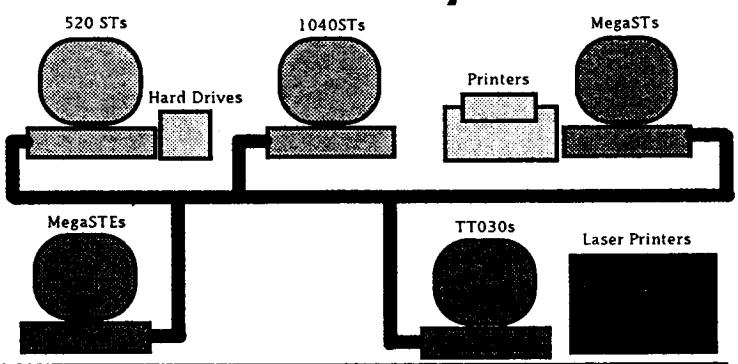
I appreciate your indulgence in allowing me to stray from my assigned task to share my opinions and concerns. Now that I have had a chance to bend your ear, I think I can resume my original mission with greater enthusiasm. I haven't been entirely derelict in my duties, though. I have found a couple of interesting programs in recent searches of GEnie, that I hope to tell you about soon.

Since completing my last column for *Current Notes*, my family has been up to its elbows in boxes. Against all odds, we managed to sell our house that had been on the market for close to a year. Through much of the summer, we packed box after box with our important possessions. We barely succeeded in moving five bedrooms' worth of furniture, two children, two cats, three hermit crabs, and a dog with unsightly skin warts to our new home by settlement day. Incredibly, we put forth this effort to move one mile up the street. It's now mid-September, and we are still unpacking.

As I wade through box after box, my mind conjures up more pleasant alternatives to the drudgery that accompanies a major move. I imagine how neat it would have been if I could have merely unhitched my communicator from a pair of spandex trousers and contacted Scotty on board the Enterprise. I can just see myself flipping the communicator open and barking into the speaker. "Hey, Scotty, could you beam me, the wife and kids, and all our stuff over to our new house? I asked the wife if we could beam the pets into deep space, but she says we've got to take them with us. It shouldn't be too hard to get us there since the new place is only a mile away. Here are the coordinates, and go easy on the Scotch, will you? I'd just as soon not materialize inside the drywall."While I can only pretend to give them to Scotty, I can leave my new coordinates with you, and until next time, take care!

Brian Miller (703) 878-7703
4499 Edsall Drive
Woodbridge, VA 22193

Connectivity.....



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D.E.K.A.
The Ultimate Data Interface
by Jeff Wiles

I have been an Atari ST user since 1986 and just recently upgraded to an Atari STe. My years of computing with Atari have been a joy for the most part and I have very few complaints about the computer itself. The ST may have a few drawbacks but usually some hacker comes along and creates a product to overcome this.

Since day one of the ST computer, a major drawback to it was a mushy keyboard. I don't care how fast a person can type, you put him on a standard ST keyboard and the rate will drop. The keys are oversized and they don't have a good tactical feel. You may be asking, "Who needs a good keyboard, we've got a mouse." Right? WRONG! The mouse may be a great addition to computers, but a good keyboard is a must.

So what can we do? Well, there are a couple of products on the market right now that will allow you to hook up a PC keyboard to a ST computer. The one I feel deserves a lot of attention is D.E.K.A.

What the heck is a D.E.K.A.? D.E.K.A. is an interface box that connects to your computer by way of a modular jack and cable. You then plug your mouse, joystick and PC keyboard into the interface box. Quick, simple and clean. The unit comes with 2 different keyboard connectors making it compatible with all ST(e) computers.

Let me tell you right now that I have little if any knowledge of electronic equipment, yet I have installed the D.E.K.A. in both of my ST(e) computers. The directions that came with the unit were very good and described how to install it in ALL ST computers.

Installation requires removing the top of the ST and unplugging the ST keyboard connector from the motherboard. The D.E.K.A. connector is then installed where the original ST keyboard connector went. Once this is done, you are ready for the second step. The D.E.K.A. connector has a modular jack which needs to be mounted to the ST. This involves cutting a square hole (.55 inches by 1.3 inches) on the chassis, location depending on which machine the modification is being done, and securing it in place with a non-corrosive adhesive. Replacing the top of the computer completes the initial stage of the installation.

Once this is done, plug one end of the modular cable into the just installed jack and the other end into the D.E.K.A. unit. All that remains is plugging the XT/AT keyboard, mouse and joystick into the D.E.K.A. unit. Like I said before, *quick, clean,* and *simple.*

The directions come with a list of confirmed PC keyboards that will work with the unit and I'm sure the list has grown over the past year as more and more units have been sold. I bought a Maxi Switch keyboard for about $38 and have had no problems with it even though this keyboard was not listed. Also listed as options were: a battery backed clock to keep track of time even when the computer is off, and barcode support which interfaces to the joystick port. The unit also comes with a one year parts and labor warranty and firmware (the brain chip which makes it all work) updates at a small charge.

The only problem I have had with D.E.K.A., and was reported by most users, was with a phantom mouse click. Sometimes while moving the mouse across the screen, objects would act like they were being clicked by the mouse even though they weren't. Omnimon Peripheral came up with a quick fix for this problem. By adding a few resisters to the unit, it became as stable as the ST. End of problem. This fix could be done by the user or sent to Omnimon and be done for free. Now that's what I consider user support.

The results of this little hardware project: I couldn't be happier. There are no software drivers to load, it just works and works *great.* Finally, I have an ST computer that my fingers can fly on and not get tired. There are many things we add to our systems to improve them and D.E.K.A. is one that ranks towards the top of the list. If you are looking for a way to add a detachable keyboard to your ST computer, D.E.K.A. deserves a serious look.

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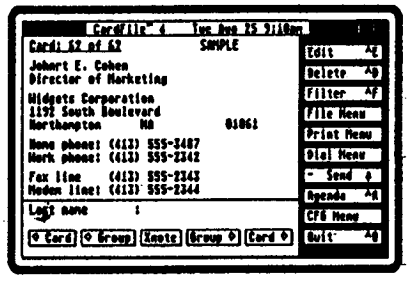

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CURRENT NOTES ST LIBRARY

September 1991

580d: PizzMini. Stick figure (pizzicata) ballet animation with sound. (C) 1MB

581d: Calamus #5. Fonts (Bernard Tangle, Absolute, Talansty, Windsor, Upperwes, Uncialds, Recycle, Galleria, Roosthvy, Hotshot, Fundrunk, Diego, Chilpepr, and Mini6). FontView; 239 GEnie Calamus messages

582d: Llamatron & Damocles. Arcade games. Req 1Mb (C)

583d: BC-Fortran77. V1.3C contains the compiler, linker, run-time library, math library and manuals.

584: Omni BBS. V1.01. Multi-user, multi-tasking bulletin board system.

585d: HyperLink Demo. Limited capabilities, but gives you a good idea of what HyperLINK can do for you.

586d: Font Designer V2.0 Demo

587d: Word Flair 1.5 Demo

588: Utilities. Uncle V3.5c (versatile file utility); ElfBoot V2 (boot-up options); DC Disk Stat (disk structure info)

589: Utilities. Address/phone bk desk acc.; ClockSetter; Compare1 (compare/search files); DC Homey (find mouse!); DC Salvage; File Sorter V1.3 (sorts anything); Make*A*Date (scheduler/diary/phone book/notes database); Caps Lock Key Status; Bells & Whistles Videotape database.

November 1991

590d: VDOS ProQueue. Menu program, and massive utility all built into one. Shareware.

591: Calamus SL Demo (M)

592d: Mono Game Disk. Online Backgammon, Bloecke, Criss-Cross, Renaissance (checkers), GoBang, Poker Squares, Pong, Super Breakout, Zest Poker.

593d: Arcade Games. (C) Bloecke, Boing, Demolition Man 1.3, Football, Snowball Fight.

594d: ST Midi Disk. DigiPlay Plus (digitized sound player); Esion demo; Midi Music Maker V2 (synth req +1Mb); Midi Rhythm Editor; ST NoiseTracker (4- channel sampled music composition tool).

595: Archive Programs. Arc Shell Ver2.6; EDM Shell (simplifies use of ARC, LZH, and ZIP); Extract'r (gen'l purpose archive extractor shell); LZH V2.01de; XShell; ZOO V2.1; ZOO Shell V06.

596d: Sudden View Demo (unique editor).

597d: Terminal Programs. G.I.M.E. Term Demo and docs; GIMEXYZA, GIMEXYZP, ST Term; GEM XYZ.TTP.

598d: Arabesque Professional Demo. Req. 1 Mb (M).

599d: B/STAT, Version 2.41d. Sophisticated graphing and statistical analysis program. Req 1 MB.

600d: Clip Art, Christmas Scenes 1

601d: Clip Art, Christmas Scenes 2

602d: Clip Art, Birds

603d: Clip Art, Dinasours/Reptiles

604d: Clip Art, Cars

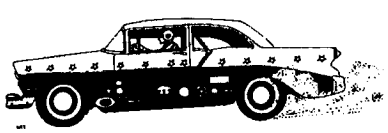
605d: Clip Art, Bikes

606d: Clip Art, Planes

607d: Clip Art, Trains

608d: Clip Art, Boats 1

609d: Clip Art, Boats 2



December 1991

610d: Clip Art, Computers 1

611d: Clip Art, Computers 2

612d: Clip Art, Houses

613d: Clip Art, Printers Ornaments 1

614d: Clip Art, Printers Ornaments 2

615d: Clip Art, Printers Ornaments 3

616d: Clip Art, Printers Ornaments 4

617d: Clip Art, Frmaes

618d: Clip Art, Cars/Buses

619d: Clip Art, Signs/Headings

620d: Games. Beyond; Jeopardy V3; Milborne; Monopoly; Warships. (C)

621d: Offender. fully playable game demo. (C)

622d: Games. Amaze; Astro Tunnel; Dromepre; MahJongg; Noids V75; Warzone. (C)

623d: Mono Games. Catch Me; Frustration!; Manipulator; Pai Gow poker; Schieb ST; Wunder. (M)

624d: Game Demos. Boston Bomb Club; Eliemouse Complimentary Coloring Book; Desktop Repeat.

625: ST Writer Elite. V4.4 (Replaced w/#704d.)

626: Terminal Programs. Demo of FreeZe Dried Software Terminal v2.03; IG216; GEM-Kermit; Atari BBS Listings.

627d: GP-Edit Library Demo. Use with GFA Basic 3.x; allows novice programmers to get the same results as the professionals do.

628d: Omega 0.75!. All ASCII Role Playing Game (RPG). Has really neat maps, multiple classes, jobs, a huge landscape to explore, five gods, in depth magic/clerical type system!

629d: Utilities. Accent (type any char in any text field); Argus (disk info); Check HD 81 (HD checker); Clock V17e (desk acc clock); BootPlus (boot-up options); Cut&Paste V1.5; DC Programs (Light Off; Mouse-o-Meter; Mouser; Mouse Saver; No Alert; PopBar; Rez Run); A&D's Disk Operational Speed Tester; Disk Statistics V1.1; Find Dups; Find Mac; Form Do It; FSelect; LowSwitch; MClock (corner clock); Musical Disk Formatter; Monitor Magic (green or amber screen); N_Format (formats 720K IBM PC disk); MenuBar Time Accessory; Speed Meter (benchmarking prg); STINT V3.1 (select TSRs); Sure Copy; Winx V1.3 (open more GEM windoes); Zoom (zooms in on mono screen).

630: Toy Prolog. full implementation of the Prolog language for the ST, documentation in German, has access to ST's VDI routines for drawing to screen. Any book on Prolog can be used to study and use this program. (M)

631d: Calamus #6. Calendar; Extended Characters; Forms Set; F-Scale; Manual Layout; Text Rulers; Fonts (Atari Logo, Diane, Krazy, Moscow Regular, Premier Lightline, Shalom, Showboat, Tiempo Light, Tiempo Light Italic, Tiempo).

632d: A.J.Wrotniak Programs. STAR2000-a subset of Star Base from Debonair Software; SUBCAL V2.0 a subset of El_Cal, the electronic calculator (NOT just a demo.) A Humble Printer Setter; A Selective Update Utility; and Add_Book v.2R a simple address book utility

633d: Calculators. BeanCalc; Porgrammer's Calculator; Calc; CalcPlot; ColaCalc; FCalc V2.5; MI59; TN PCalc V1.2

634d: CPX Programs. Boot_CPX; XCONTROL panel w/CPXs (Color, WColors, Sound, General, Maccel, Modem, Config, and Printer);CPX_MDLS; Double; Ger_CPX (Format, Calendar, Ascii, Nvdiconf, and Ms_Cache); LaserCPX; RDY_STE; Vanity CPX; Reversi CPX.

635d: MIDI Programs. EZ-Score Plus Demo; BackTrak; Jukebox V1.1; Patterner V1.3 (MIDI music experiment kit).

636d: BBS Programs. ST Keep V3 BBS; Cows! V8.7s; BBS Express! Demo; List of BBS numbers.

637d: Education Disk. Addup game; V3.1 of CLASS gradebook; Math Quiz; Master Quiz; ST Spell Wizard; Teach ABCs; Calendar.

638d: Applications. Area Code Locator v3.0; Calendar V6.0; Edwin Text Editor Acc; First Base V1.8; Office Football Pool; InfoDisk Newsletter shell; Units conversion program.

639d: Utilities. 2 Columns, V4.0; AFX V1.2e; Change HZ; Jam Pack V4; Low_Rez (run low rez from med rez screen); MDisk V6.0 (ramm disk acc); PFX V1.7e; System Sentry; Uncle V3.7; Uncle Volume; WhatIs V5.1.

February 1992

640: System Disk 1. For 520ST owners, everything you need to ARC and unARC files.

641d: System Disk 2. For 1040ST/Mega owners, everything you need to ARC and unARC files plus SuperBoot and more.

642d: System Disk Archives. Complete archives for disks 640 and 641.

643d: Utilities. CartHold, Cookies (replace mouse arrow w/ cookie), DBEyes (eyes follow your mouse), EDDA (text ed. desk acc.), EDM Shell 2.20 (handles arc, lzh, zip, zoo), Pathmap 1.0 (install apps on GEM desktop), N_Desktp (change background pattern of desktop), Nosey (search for string in files), StdCat50 (Disk catalog prg), TLC Programs (shareware) TLC_Atr2, TLC_Book2, TLC_Form2, TLC_Fxr2, TLC_Namr2, TLC_Play2, TLC_Show2.

644d: Write-On Demo. PD scrolling demo of the Write On! Req 1 MB (M).

645d: Copilot. Runtime version of eSTeem PILOT, an authoring language for creating tutorials, drills, tests, interactive dialog, games, and simulations.

646d: Arcade Games. Noids V100, Demolition Man 2.0, 3_Shoots. (C)

647: GP Edit Demo Games. Fully playable: Bobble, MS.Pac, and MultiGame (Worm, FireCop, Megapede, Breakout, and Setrys.) (C)

648d: Commercial Demos. Data Diet, EdHak Ver 2.2, MultiDesk Deluxe, Word Search Creator, Crossword Creator II, and MIDI Spy.

649d: Finance. Checkbook, Stock->Smart V2.1, MEGA-Check.

March 1992

650d: GFA Expert. Alternative GFA-BASIC 3 Manual, 2nd Ed. by Han Kempen, The Netherlands. 120+ pages.

651d: Utilities. AtariHD5 (latest official Atari Hard Drive Utilities); DiskLock; Faze (screen saver), FujiMaus (shareware from Chet Walters), JumpSTART 2.0 (run files with single mouse click), Mouse Boot (boot-up configuration prg), PinHead 2.1 (speeds up loading of prgs), and XBOOT Demo (The Boot Manager).

652d: Utilities. EDM Shell V2.21, LzhShell, ST ZIP v1.1, Super Boot V7.4 (select desk acc, auto prgs at boot-up), and File Thrasher (completely zeroes out deleted files).

653d: Astronomy. GnomPlot v4.2 (Astronomy shareware prg req 1MB Mono) and Satellite Prediction Program V4.04 (track satellites).

654: Games: 21/Camels. 21 (blackjack game for one player against dealer), Camels (whacko shoot-em up). (C)

655: Games: Ammotrak/Gold Seeker. AmmoTrak (high-speed graphics, drive rocket sled); Gold Seeker (better than Lode Runner). (C)

656d: Games: Triples/Robot Repairs. Triples (match three-of-a-kinds); RR (demo: enter Robot in minaturized probe). (C)

657: Name Brand Clip Art. 50 product logos. (IMG)

658d: Language Helper. MultLang (translation between German/English words.) SpellOne (spell-checker) Abbreviator ST V11 Demo

659d: Utilities. Two Column Printer, BootTyme (waits for HD, no key to press), DC Reserve, Edi-Util (screen saver, file selector, mouse acc), FileTool (copy, rename, delete, move, etc), Fishes (fishes on your screen), FujiWatch (places rotating or rainbow Fuji symbol into desktop), GoGoST42 (replacement desktop), K_Text V1.6.4 (document file reader), Lock (password protection), NBM v1.2 (benchmark your ST/STe/TT), RAM_Test (no STe or TT), ShowMem4 (shows system memory blocks), SilkMouse2 (shareware mouse accelerator), StarSaver V0.50 (screen saver), WhatIs57 (identify files).

April 1992

660d: Clip Art. Wild West 68 IMG

661d: Clip Art. Military 91 IMG.

662d: Clip Art. Police 44 IMG.

663d: Clip Art. Teddy Bear 1, 30 IMG.

664d: Clip Art. Teddy Bear 2, 30 IMG.

665d: Clip Art. Teddy Bear 3, 30 IMG.

666d: Clip Art. 43 ESG Samples (IMN).

667d: Clip Art. Kids/School 69 IMG.

668d: Clip Art. Caricatures 95 IMG.

669d: Clip Art. Miscellaneous 46 IMG.

670d: Picture Packer. Picture compressor, converter, and a graphics editor, all in one package.

671d: Crack-Art. Shareware drawing program from Germany, includes many sophisticated drawing features.

672d: Diabetic Recipes. 125 diabetic recipes for use with the included Assistant Chef program. (C)

673d: Portfolio #1. PD for use with the Portfolio computer: Blackjack, LZEXE, PBAS45, PortPart, PTool, TBasic, XTerm, GuiChess, Lmine.

674d: Uniterm 2.0e. Best terminal program for the ST. Full featured, complete with users guide.

675d: 3 Arcade Games: Blox, Katrix, Other Place. (C)

676: CVG Clip Art. 57 vector graphic pictures (CVG) for use with Calamus.

677d: Mathematician's Helper. Fast fourier transform grapher, Matrix manipulation, turing system analysis, calculator, and subcal.

678d: Spice. Circuit analysis program: analyze electrical circuits of any nature.

679d: Sozobon C. V1.33i, (See #744d for update.)

May 1992

The MiNT Collection: 680–684

680d: MiNT Binaries. The multitasking kernal used in Atari's upcoming MultiTOS. Includes docs and basic shell. Req at least 1 MB. Best results with a hard drive.

681d: MiNT Sources. The C source code for MiNT. Complete with documentation. Modify MiNT to suit your own needs.

682d: MiNT Libraries. libraries necessary for compiling programs for use under MiNT. Includes Sozobon libraries too.

683d: MiNT Include Files. Include files for compilation of programs plus a utilities section with pre compiled functions that you can link into your own programs.

684d: MiNT Utilities. Includes the loadable Minix file system, Allan Pratt's akputils and pstopls, and also Allan Pratt's init9akp shell.

685d: Home Accounts 2 Demo. Similar to Phasar, this program will organize your household finanaces and get your budget back on track.

686d: Cyber #1. Cyber animation sequences: the golfing tragedy and the flight of the bumblebee. Viewer included.

687d: C-Lisp. The English release of Lisp for the Atari ST. This is the language used by several people in artificial intelligence. Note: documentation is limited.

688d: STe Demos. BALLS–raytraced balls moving over a semi–reflective picture of a fractal. DYNAMITE good sound demo with 8 Polyphonic channels 25Khz Digi–Synth Routs in stereo. 7 Soundtracks, 20 minutes of playing time.

689d: Aladdin V1.41. Latest version of Aladdin, a program any GEnie user should not be without. Also includes a demo of GEnie Assistant and a tutorial on constructing Aladdin scripts.

June 1992

690d: Star Trek: The Klingon War (C)

691d: Games: Flipped!, Poker Dice, Roulette, Computer Yahtzee. (C)

692d: Equalizer (STe moving pixels demo) (C)

693d: Digitized Sounds (CNNvoice, Dragnet, Longtarz, Ivefall, Twilight, Arnie, Eastwood).

694d: Quartet Player (includes 4 songs and voice sets); Amodem Demo (scrolling graphics w/good digitized sound, best on STe).

695d: Demos: Convector Professional; and Stock the Market.

696d: Utilities (by Stuart Coates). AutoCapture, HD Boot Wait, Drive Boot Select Utility, Boot Sector Storage System, Custom Disk Formatter, Disk Cataloguing System, Revenge Documnent Displayer, Drive Divertor, File Killer, Funky Screen Flipper, JCLabel, Marrow, PC–Trace, Repolay/Master Sound Converter, Scan–r–Pic, ST–Worm, Drive B Installer/Deinstaller, ...

697d: Games (Euchre, 5 of a Kind, Invasion of Mutant Caterpillars, Bang!) (C)

698d: Calamus Fonts #7 Albatros Medium, Alexandria Medium, Andromeda Medium, ANS, Arabian Normal, Ashley, Becker Medium, Black Forest, Caligula, Caraway Bold, Deja–VU, Dobkin, ...

699d: Business Clip Art 48 IMB files of work/office scenes.

July/August 1992

700: SpiritWare's Bible Concordance, Part 1 (SS)

701d: SpiritWare's Bible Concordance, Part 2

702d: Calligrapher Demo

703d: Elimouse Complimentary Coloring Book(C)

704d: ST Writer Elite V4.8 (Works with SST and TEC board.)

705d: Calamus Winners from the Calamus Creativity and Design Contest

706d: Utilities (DiskSave (recover disk with bad sectors), Finder V12 (automatically locates whatever files a prg is looking for), JClabel V3 (mailing label manager), OnTime V2.2 (set system date/time, viel calendar, select background fill), Tool V1.9 (listing/editing FAT, Hex dump, etc), Worm (puts read only flag on files), FontKill (Type One Font Killer by David Troy.)

707d: Warp 9 32 pictures, Fonts, CherryHi, MovePics (randomn W9 background pics).

708d: Demos (Inventory Pro V6.1 and Payroll Expert)

709d: Game Demos (Populous II, Conquer, Knightmare, Penguin)(C)

710: RPG Games (Quest, Pacific Island, Robin Hood)

711d: Arcade Games (Hurry!, Marbleous, Cops'n'Robbers, Sno–fite)(C)

712d: Triplink! FEDBBS (Latest release from SoniC! Software.)

713d: Transcendence BBS Demo, Part 1

714d: Transcendence BBS Demo, Part 2

715d: ST Keep BBS (up to 32000 users.)

716d: Telecom: BBS online games (Assassin, Galactic Empire), Ghost Writer (desk acc uploads any text file), Joute (play shareware combat game over modem), Rufus (terminal program.)

717d: Utilities (1st Spooler (print spoolder desk acc), BootTyme II (waits for HD to spin up), Bubble (help locate mouse), ChangesZ (more storage on floppy), Company (desk acc disk formatter, clock, etc), CapsLock Status, Dots Screen Saver, EDM Shell 2.24 (archive shell prg), Find–All (searches group of files for specific string), Look ST V1.6 (view text files on screen), Multi–Depacker V1.0, Pool Fix92 (fixes all known bugs in Poolfix), TimeCard V1.01 (desk acc that keeps track of time spent on computer.)

718d: Ideal_List Incredible text file print utility. (German)

719d: Utilities: Archive Shell, Binary Editor, HD Information V1.7, James the Desktop Butler, LZH V201K, Protect6 (guard against virus), Request V1.09 (GEM shell for Quester LH5 series archiver), Re–Boot2 (delays bootup process for HD), Serial FIX (fix problems in ST/TT modem port), Tree View (desk acc displays file org of your disks.)

720d: Monochrome Word Fun: Search Me (word search puzzle generator), ABC Jumble (educational game), Jumble (puzzle word unscrambler), ZeST Keno, Mumbo Jumbo (word game.)

721d: Demos: Silhouette V1.37, G_Man V3.0, UK Virus Killer)

722d: Quotes and Names

723d: Utilities: Strip Formatter, Calendar V6.2, Memory (fool computer into thinking it has less RAM than it does), Screen Saver (color or mono pic in floating balloon), ZeST Le Menu (med res prg that runs other programs.)

724d: Font GDOS, Part 1

725d: Font GDOS, Part 2

726: MiNT Windowing Systems for MiNT (SS)

727d: MiNT Utilities, Part 1

728d: MiNT Utilities, Part 2

729d: MiNT Shells

September 1992

730: **ORCS** Otto's Resource Construction Set (SS)
731d: **Cyber Animations** (Gunship, Lamp, Vidibat) (C)
732: **Roland MT- 32** Music Studio Demo for Roland MT-32
733: **dbWRITER** word processor (M)
734d: **dbWRITER** Dictionary and Thesaurus (M)
735d: **Telecom** FreeZe Dried Software Terminal V2.20 and ANSITerm
736d: **Games** (Moonlord ST, Munchie V1.0, Drachen) (C)
737d: **Arena Earth** game (C)
738d: **That's Write** Fonts #1
739d: **That's Write** Fonts #2

October 1992

740d: **HyperLINK** Runtime Package
741d: **HyperLINK** Applications #1 (Bbal, Coinbook, Inv, Msg-Adr, Menu, Planets, Racer, Repair, Sharwr13)
742d: **HyperLINK** Applications #2 (Softwr11, Stat20, Wheels20, Wines)
743: **VanTerm V4.0** (Terminal program)
744d: **Sozobon C** V2.0
745d: **MJC/GNU C** Mark Johnson C and Complete GNU C Binaries
746d: **Sound Merlin V1.0** (sample, sequence, and drum-kit editor)
747d: **CompuServe Disk** (QuickCIS and other CIS utilities)
748d: **DigiStuff!** (package of digitized sound utilities)
749d: **Pure Pascal Demo**
750d: **Games** (Ozone, Tuzzle, Spider, Tanx, TV Adv) (C)
751d: **Power DOS +** (Power DOS, GoGo ST V5.0, JumpStart V2.7, TeraDesk)
752d: **Demos** (STyle and Data Diet)

November 1992

753: **Cookbooks: The Recipe Box!** is a database dedicated to the storage, retrieval, and printing of recipes. (C/M). **WineMaker**: This is a wine making data base, containing several recipies and other info needed for the production of wine. (M)
754d: **Demos**: **Mah-Jong** Solitaire V3.0 Demo from Cali-Co Software and **Mailing Manager ST Demo**, the ultimate mailing list program for your Atari ST/TT.
755d/756d: **Calamus SL Demo**. Save-disabled demo version of Calamus SL includes 8 modules: Frame, Line, Raster, Page, System, Text, Text Style and the Document Converter module and 5 import modules; CVG, CRG, GIF and IMG so that you can import pictures and CTX for text.
757d: **CyberDrome Demo**. CyberDrome-The HoverJet Simulator, combines the realism of a real-time flight simulator with arcade action and problem solving and exploration of an adventure game. Single player or a unique 2-player/2-computer mode. Req. 1 Mb (C)
758d/759d: **Invision Elite Demo**. New demo version of INVISION Elite, the ultimate black and white imaging package, includes HP Deskjet and LaserJet support. Sample pictures are on disk 759d. (M)
760d: **Wrotniak '92 Updates**: Another yearly update of **Star 2000**, a freeware subset of Star Base (v.1.21), This is a database of stars, deep sky objects and planets, with extensive mapping capabilities. **Sub_Cal**, a freeware subset of the commercial program El_Cal (v.2.21). In addition to being an expression-parsing calculator, Sub_Cal computes integrals and derivatives, solves linear, non-linear and differential equation systems, plots functions and statistical data, fits curves (to any shape) and distributions, finds extrema of multi-parameter functions, converts units and MUCH more.
761d: **Adventure Game Toolkit V1.3**. Adventure Game Toolkit v1.3-Allows you to create text adventure games or compile and/or run the multitude of available quality AGT sources and executable games.
762: **Arcade Games**. **Chateau Santa**-arcade game/great graphics/race through the Chateau to find the Christmas tree before you run out of time. **Spirits**-Help ghosts escape from great danger. **Concentration** with at twist: instead of matching visual symbols, you match beeps and boops of sound. (C)
763d: **Clip Art**: 55 assorted high res IMG files for use in DTP. (People, Church, Houses, Animals, Adventure Scenes, Alphabet.)
764d: **SEDT Editors**. GSEDT and TSEDT are an implementation of DEC's EDT editor for the Atari ST. GSEDT makes good use of the ST's GEM environment; supports the mouse, multiple buffers and windows (up to four) and adds many word processing features (i.e. rulers).
765d: **Calamus Fonts #8**. DejaVodu, Choice Ten, Goudy Sorts, Pala, Pepita, Hari Extra Bold, Handwriting, Gismonda, Devil Chancery, Oregon Dry, Oregon Wet, Medusa. Also includes CDK that shows a reference chart of the Atari System font with corresponding asci numbers.
767: **Utilities**. V1.4 of Blitzschnell (drive defragmenter/optimizer with a unique visual twist!) BootKill (AUTO prg to rename all your AUTO prgs and DA's so they won't be loaded in.) CALLTIM3 (calls the US Naval Observatory and sets the computer's internal clock.) EXPANDER (acc converts from 320k SS disks to 720k DS disks in one operation.) LOCKCPX (prevent your HD being accessed.) ReNameIt (add lowercase and extended characters to your filenames.) RESET1_1 (Use CTRL-ALT-RS for cold start; CTRL-ALT-LS for warm start with this AUTO program.) SilkMouse 2.6a (rewritten to remove a bug and address a couple of compatibility issues.) SYSTEM (displays many system parameters including ram space, disk space, HD space, GDOS, Blitter. It will set floppy seek rate and do a few other nifty things.)
767d: **B/Stat V2.43**: B/STAT is a shareware graphics and statistical analysis program. It requires minimum of 1 meg and a double sided drive. It can use GDOS but does not require it.

ST Reports 1992

SR1d: January and February
SR2d: March and April
SR3d: May and June
SR4d: July and August
SR5d: September and October

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CN PD and shareware disks are $4.00 each (10 for $35). Two-disk sets are $7/pair. Add $1. S&H for every 6 disks. Order disks from CN Library, 122 N Johnson Rd, Sterling VA 20164. Charge your order with VISA or MC by calling (703) 450-4761.

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For Sale: 520 ST, color, 30 Mb HD, 3 disk drives, 41 programs, 2 scanners, 2.5 Mb RAM, tweety board, video and sound digitizer $1,400. Call John (918) 744-8639.

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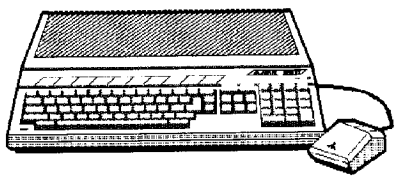
Computers



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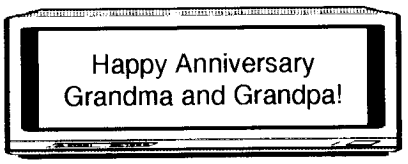

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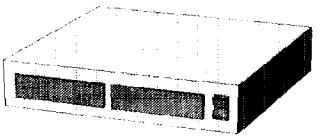

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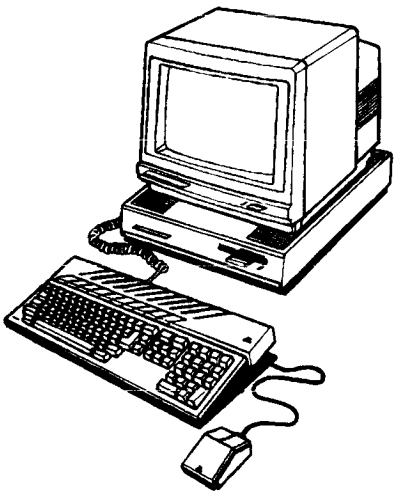

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